THE CHURCH
AND THE
PEOPLE'S PLAY

HENRY A. ATKINSON

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THE CHURCH AND THE PEOPLE'S PLAY

BY

HENRY A. ATKINSON

Social Service Secretary for the Congregational
Churches of the United States

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

WASHINGTON GLADDEN

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By HENRY A. ATKINSON

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DEDICATION

TO THAT LARGE AND GROWING GROUP OF MEN
AND WOMEN BOTH WITHIN AND WITHOUT
THE CHURCH WHO GIVE FIRST
PLACE TO THE NEEDS
OF HUMANITY

PREFACE

THIS book is written for the purpose of showing the importance of play in the life of individuals and the community and the relation of the church to the question, especially in its democratic aspects. I feel that much of what I have said is familiar to those interested in the play and recreation movements. My interest in the philosophy of play and the various theories advanced is incidental to my main purpose. It has not been my intention to break new ground so much as to bring facts to the attention of the churches and church people and point out tendencies that are well known; and by presenting a constructive program, if possible, help the churches to meet the new and pressing problems.

I have used quotations freely and have tried to give credit to writers and investigators. As most of the material on this subject is printed in pamphlets and periodical literature, I have not attempted by the use of foot-notes to record pages on which quotations may be found. Acknowledgment is made to all those whose material I have used and especially to those to whom I am conscious of an indebtedness for reports, facts and statements, and of whose exact source I am not certain.

A full bibliography is given in the back of the book in which are listed all the books, articles and reports to which reference has been made. I also acknowledge my indebtedness to my wife, Grace O. Atkinson, for her efficient and untiring labor in research, in collecting, reading and making notes on the literature dealing with this subject, as well as her constructive criticism.

The churches have never faced their task with a more hopeful spirit and the promises for the future were never better than they are today. If this book helps in any small way I shall be glad.

HENRY A. ATKINSON.

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INTRODUCTION

Mr. Atkinson grapples, in this discussion, with a question which has been beaten to a frazzle by the controversialists of many generations. There are few subjects on which so many foolish things have been written and spoken; on which counsel has been more effectually darkened by words without knowledge.

Yet the interest of play is one upon which there is great need of wisdom. It is a vital interest; every year it is becoming more so. One of the most thoughtful books of recent months makes this suggestion, to which serious minds may well give heed: "The way in which people spend their lives after the day's journey is over—the way in which they play—offers them the best chance of contributing to the enhancement of one another's lives. If the time ever comes when poverty is comparatively negligible and when human impoverishment can no longer be charged up to gross economic maladjustment, if such a time ever comes, as it well may, the rule of live-and-help-live will assume a better meaning than it has at present and will challenge the development of a better quality of human nature. Only then, when the end of the day's journey leaves the travellers lively, will the brethren and the sisters be so situated that they can make life very interesting and remunerative for one another."*

That the day is coming when there will be larger leisure for all is one thing to hope for, and no need will be more imperative than the power to use that leisure wisely. How to make play recreative, wholesome, productive, is a great part of wisdom. The church which has not learned how to use this great resource is poorly equipped for the service of the present age.

Mr. Atkinson offers no novelties of social philosophy and prescribes no panaceas, but he has been living in this generation and he knows the conditions, and his rational and practicable counsels are likely to have weight with intelligent readers.

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* "Progressive Democracy," by Herbert Croly—p. 429.

WASHINGTON GLADDEN.

Columbus, Ohio.
Aug. 5, 1915.

I

THE CASE STATED

CHAPTER I

THE CASE STATED

Everybody, of course, knows that it is natural for children to play and that play has a marked influence upon the physical growth and moral character of individuals; but only the few realize that play is essential to every normal life and at every period of life.

Play is defined as "any exercise or series of actions intended for amusement, diversion, or relaxation from work." Exercise may be physical, mental, or a combination of both. Play is a general term. Diversion suggests "that which pleasantly distracts the mind from cares or business." Amusement means any "form of pleasurable excitement or interest." Recreation is "diversion for the sake of refreshment or relaxation." It really recreates body and mind. A game is play under the form of a contest, "usually in accord with fixed rules." The term sport applies especially to out-door games. In the use of the word "play" all of these different meanings are to be kept in mind.

Play is an end in itself. It is doing a thing for the sake of the doing. Work has reference to the result to be attained; hence work is doing a thing for a reward. The same process may be employed in both work and play. For instance when one plays for the sake of the game it is play, but when the interest centers in the stake or the prize the same action ceases to be play and becomes work. Men who are making strenuous mental effort, such as that required of the railway mail clerk in memorizing thousands of names of post-offices and railway-lines, the times of trains and their connections, find the best way to gain the result is through some form of play. The mail-clerk finds it helpful to write the names of stations, the trains and the connections on cards and thus invents a game. In this way his work becomes a game to be played, and the play is work. One man who has been remarkably successful in this work says that he best rests himself from his arduous task by playing solitaire, and often uses two packs of cards, working out different forms of the game. This is play, although it is practically the same activity as that demanded by his work.

The play of the people is determined by the dispositions and demands of individuals and the opportunities offered for meeting these demands. Two girls and a little boy were busy one afternoon sailing shingle boats in a flooded gutter in the city of Baltimore. At one point they had gathered together a pile of stones and pieces of sticks. These were loaded upon their boats which were set adrift. Stopping at intervals down the gutter a portion of their cargo was discharged. When they reached the end of the run the boats were unloaded and carried back up stream where the process was repeated. This part of Baltimore is near the docks, in the city's most congested district. Within five blocks of their homes boats were being loaded and unloaded every day. In all probability their parents were connected in some way with the shipping industry. At any rate they were thoroughly familiar with boats and water transportation. In Cheyenne a similar group of children would be throwing a rope, building corrals, or imitating some of the other operations suggested by frontier civilization. Last summer the children at the sea side resorts were building forts on the beaches and arming them with wooden cannons. It is a common complaint against the boys who play in the streets of our larger cities that they make themselves a nuisance to the police and the neighbors by climbing poles, window fronts, or any thing else that is climbable, and by swinging on the awnings. Those who have philosophized over this tendency of boys to climb and hang by their arms say that it is a reversion to type and proves that man once lived in trees and was accustomed to swing himself from branch to branch.

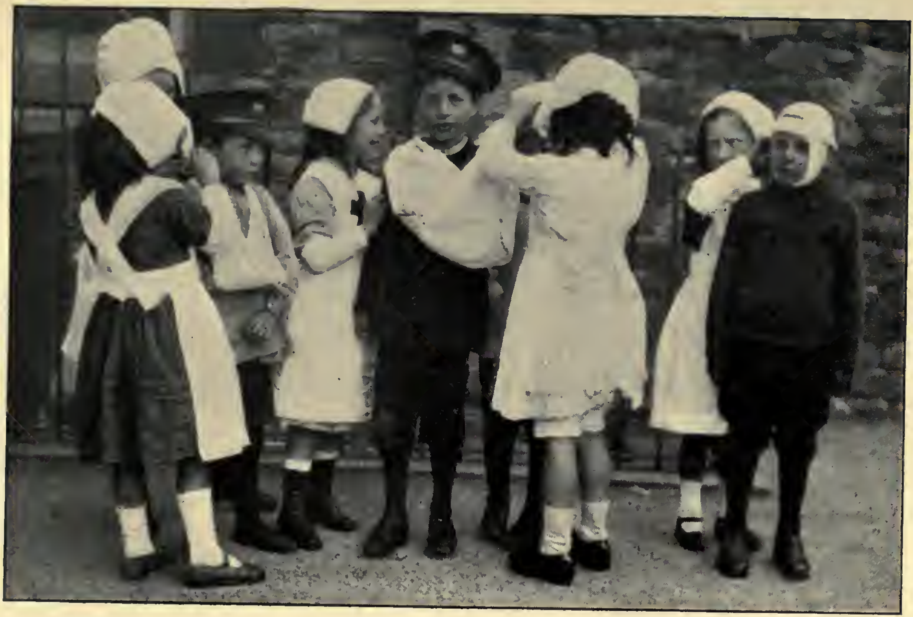


Photo by Paul Thompson

PLAYING AT WAR

At many schools and at most of the centers where children congregate they may be seen playing war games

Whatever is to be said for this theory, one thing is surely true: the only reason the city boy does not climb a tree is because there is no tree at hand. He does the next best thing and uses the only opportunities for play that fortune has thrown in his pathway. Men gather in saloons, in clubs, play golf, hunt, fish, attend ball games, theaters and dances because of the desire for play and for social intercourse, desires that are universal. This instinct for play is not easily destroyed and while it develops more readily under cheerful and happy conditions, it is not killed even by the dull grind of poverty and hardship.

The deadly monotony of the common life of today with its incessant toil, its planning for the future, its carrying of heavy burdens, makes a demand upon us to study the question of play and its relationship to life. Even if the work that we do be agreeable there is need for occasional change. It is a psychological as well as a physiological fact that some form of amusement is necessary to enable men and women to maintain a healthy equilibrium of mind and body.

The desire for play and the need of play continues with us; but under the changed conditions and the artificial circumstances in which most people live today the question is forced upon us, how are we to play? Jane Addams illustrates the great change that is brought about by our modern city and its demands, by utilizing the old illustration of the kitten and says: "Suppose that after the kitten has practised and become a proficient mouse-catcher it suddenly finds itself a grown-up cat in a city, where there are no mice to catch and where it has to live on canned mouse meat. To such a cat, living in a mouseless factory or office, nothing could give so much pleasure as the occasional use of its muscles along the traditional lines of mouse catching, or in a game where skill stimulated mouse catching and which therefore made the same demand upon his alertness of eye and readiness of spring which mouse catching had made upon his long line of ancestors. Such a game would give to the city cat a sense of rest, of recreation, of restored well being, of mental stimulation which nothing else in the world could possibly afford him." The actual fact is that most people live under conditions that are just about as strange and to which they are as little accustomed as this cat would be if made to live in a mouseless city.

The play spirit has often been the cause of disaster. But trouble arises and play becomes a danger only when it is denied a legitimate form of expression. Childhood is repressed and men and women turned into machines by our modern industrial system. Success and failure are measured by production. Life is all drab and its music turns to humdrum. After the hours of exertion real recreation is denied. The people demanding some form of play are exploited by those whose only interest is dollars and cents, and who see an opportunity for coining money at the expense of their fellows. The commercial results of play are their only consideration, and the dance hall, the saloon, the cheap theater are offered as the only means by which the people can express themselves.

The church that is to meet the needs of the people must appeal to the whole round of human interests; must care for all that has to do with life. It must take into account this very necessary element—the demand for play and the craving for amusement. On the other hand it is difficult for the modern man to appreciate the necessity of taking care of his physical condition and at the same time give to recreation only its proper place in the program of life.

The attitude of the church toward the problem of the people's play forms a serious hindrance to the work of the church. In every community those who are seeking pleasure are apt to feel that the church is largely out of sympathy with them. It is estimated that in this country about seven million people attend the moving picture shows every day. The dance halls in our cities are crowded; the pool-rooms are filled with boys and young men. The saloons are uniformly successful, not because people naturally desire to drink, but because they crave friendship, amusement, pleasure—and these the saloon provides. The saloon is especially dangerous and is the most unsocial of institutions because of its opportunities for sociability.

The church for a long time contented itself with protesting against the popular forms of amusement. It pointed out the evils but failed to show the people the better way. Very often it opposed those who attempted to meet the demand for recreation. This attitude is changing. With a new appreciation of the place play has in human life we are coming to recognize more and more that the church must help to provide forms of recreation and opportunities for play that will be safe and sufficient for the needs of all. Only thus can the church fulfill its function of inspiring, educating and helping.

II

ATTITUDE OF THE CHURCH PAST AND PRESENT

CHAPTER II

ATTITUDE OF THE CHURCH PAST AND PRESENT

THE church is the most important factor in developing the character of individuals and up-building the moral forces of the community. Those who are interested in rural reconstruction have come to recognize that the church must be enlisted in the task if there is to be any great success in working out the plans that are being formed. There would always be religion in the world if there were no church, but without strong churches religion would be so vague in its character as to be of little practical value in bettering human conditions. A common worship tends to keep alive the religious impulse in the hearts of men. Charles E. Jefferson says: "Young ministers sometimes look upon the church as a necessary evil, an inherited incumbrance, a sort of device by which preachers are handicapped in their movements and held back from the largest usefulness. Men of this type are eager to get at what they call the world. Their desire is to reconstruct the social order. They want to do things on a broad scale. It is a blunder to ignore the church in an effort to reach the masses. It is a more serious blunder to slight the church in one's direct dealings with it."

Granting the significance of the church and the importance of its position in the community life, it is of the greatest interest to know its attitude in this matter of the people's play. The community is the field of the church's endeavor, and only as the community is made the Kingdom of God wherein transformed lives are to be developed, can the church be said to succeed. "Character," says Graham Taylor, "is religion's greatest achievement and the instrumentality of all of its accomplishments." Character is helped or hindered in its development by the economic conditions surrounding the common life of today. "The quest of the best," writes William De Witt Hyde, "is the ethical equivalent of the gospel doctrine of regeneration by the spirit." Most of us will agree with Washington Gladden when he says: "The historical relation of Christianity to popular amusements is one of antagonism." We must think clearly on this subject. The church was not consciously cruel in depriving people of the things they enjoyed, nor did it fail to appreciate the need of rest and relaxation. Its doctrine was this: Granted a person needs rest and relaxation, let him take it as a sick man takes a pill, or a dose of bitter medicine. The wry face and the nasty taste will help the cure. Recreation as a means of restoring life to its normal state of being was allowable and recognized as being good, but the kind of recreation was very strictly defined. It might be sleep, a change of labor or a slackening of the pace. It was to be simply for the restoring of the waste caused by toil. If recreation had in it any element of pleasure or amusement, just in that proportion it became sinful. The distinction is thus made very clear between recreation and amusement. Amusement was looked upon as simply a pursuit of pleasure for pleasure's sake, or "a plunging into pleasurable courses for the sake of personal enjoyment." Everything that ministered to the "joy of living" was looked upon as sinful. Not only were amusements thus looked upon as sinful, but their tendencies were believed to be evil and only evil. It was believed that if we can take our recreations soberly and without getting any pleasure out of them, they are good; but amusements prompted by any other motive bear ill fruit. "The effect of amusements upon the spiritual interests of those who engage in them is to be taken into account. They withdraw the thought from God and from things divine, dissipating serious impressions, unfitting the soul for devotional exercises, and grieving away the Holy Spirit."

In this wholesale condemnation of amusements, no discrimination was made between what is good and what is bad. The prize fight and the parlor dance were put in the same category. Reading a novel, attending the theater or the bull fight and playing cards were classed as sins and compared to the gladiatorial contests and drunken orgies of Nero's Rome. In this attitude of the church it was not only the thing done that was condemned, but the joy of the doing. A writer who strongly insists upon the essential evil of all the play and amusement out of which people get pleasure on the ground that it conduces to selfishness fails to see the superlative selfishness of this concluding statement of his impassioned article: "We came into the world not for sport. We were sent here on a higher and nobler charge. Let us not then forget this charge. Let us live and act in accordance with it, so that when summoned to meet our final judge we may hope to hear Him say 'Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' " I think it is fair to say that this represents the historical attitude of the church in general regarding the people's play. A popular evangelist said recently: "If you sow the card party you will reap the blackleg gambler. Eighty per cent. of the gamblers that have been wrecked and ruined acquired the habit in so-called Christian homes. If you sow the dance, you reap prostitutes. The dance is the hot-bed of iniquity, and I denounce it as one of the rottenest, most hellish vice-producing institutions that ever wriggled from the depths of perdition. It is not an innocent amusement; it is the very worst amusement. It has caused the downfall of more girls than anything else." In a revival held in a large city about one-fourth of the total population was reported as being converted. This meant that some eleven or twelve thousand people had quit going to the theaters, had burned their cards and had given up dancing. At the ensuing election

Courtesy of Youth's Companion

PLAY ACCORDING TO OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED

1. Seesaw (Ardonia School)
2. Teeter (South Keene)
3. The Sandpile

the worst crowd that ever held office in the city's history was elected. Before the winter was over the theaters began to draw the crowds again, new cards were bought and the same round of dances and parties were attended by the same people. There can be no question of the fact that the revival did stir impulses and do good of a kind in the community; but this question is a fair one, and we may raise it with propriety: Was the standard of conversion which took away from the mass of the people their means of amusement a proper standard? Sober second thought seemed to lead the people of the community to believe that they had made a mistake in giving up these things. It would seem that nothing essential was lost, and that they could be good Christians and at the same time take part in the pleasures that they enjoyed, providing, of course, that they did not allow these things to crowd out the more serious affairs of life.

There was a good reason for the church's historic attitude on the question of amusements. Washington Gladden is undoubtedly correct in saying that it was survival of that wholesome horror and righteous enmity with which the first Christians resisted the amusements in vogue throughout the Roman Empire. The frightful debaucheries and cruelties which constituted the sports of the Romans merited the holy indignation with which the disciples denounced them. The conflict of Christianity with heathenism began in the arena of the people's play. One of the broad lines of distinction which the Christians drew between themselves and their pagan neighbors was their refusal to attend the Roman games. The theater was utterly bad, for the most popular actor was he who could behave most obscenely. The circus had a seating capacity for nearly four hundred thousand people. Here the chariot races drew immense throngs, and the race was considered most successful when horses and men were killed in the contest. The gladiatorial scenes where men, sometimes hundreds of them, fought with wild beasts and with one another, while their blood dyed the sand of the arena and the people cheered and "turned their thumbs up or down," indicating whether the human being should live or die; the social life of the time, the scenes in the magnificent baths, the drunkenness and lust, the greed, the inexcusable cruelty; if Christianity had not protested against all these things, it would have missed its high and holy calling. It was only that austere group of men who were willing to forego all earthly pleasure, to suffer, to fast, to pray and work for the coming of God's Kingdom and for the honor of Jesus Christ, who could have saved the society of that time. Against the mad debauchery, the indolence and the savage, fun-loving spirit of the people about them, this company of holy men and women in the name of Jesus of Nazareth lifted up an ideal of industry and sobriety. What a great battle had to be fought, and how bravely the fight went on! If any one feels inclined to criticize the church for its attitude, just let him read the story of "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire;" then let him turn the pages of church history and see how this earnest band which was willing to forego all earthly pleasures saved civilization and gave to the world its best gifts. In this fight there was no chance for compromise. All amusements and play of the people were so bad that discrimination and the power of choice were out of the question. The unfortunate thing is that the spirit which grew out of this struggle has dominated so much of the church life from that day to this. Conditions have changed, but we have been making the same complaint. The Puritans in England were as bitter aginst popular amusements as were the early Christians. They had undoubtedly good reason for some protest, but their judgments against men and their distorted ideas of human nature were carried so far that they denounced every form of play. The children were brought up to believe that anything that is pleasant is of Satan, and every amusement, no matter how harmless it may be in and of itself, is sinful. Having the power of the State back of them they were able to enforce the decisions of their consciences upon others.

The church has said more against amusements than against almost any other activity and has made great efforts to get people to give up their forms of play. The more nearly one was able to obliterate the sense of enjoyment from his life, and the more asceticism one brought into his existence, the more nearly like a saint he was thought to be, for the only joy of a saint is "to think upon holy things." This scorn of the world has unfortunately made good people remiss in their efforts to better human conditions. If the world is a bad place, and the Christian's duty is to pass through it as rapidly and by as little contact with it as possible, why should he try to make it any better? The only wise thing to do with a worthless garment is to throw it away. It is folly to attempt to patch it. Thomas à Kempis advises: Keep thyself as a stranger and a pilgrim upon the earth who hath nothing to do with the affairs of this world."

How much time we have spent in discussing whether baseball, or billiards, or dancing, or theater going or card playing are in and of themselves sinful! The question is not to be settled by arguing for or against these specific things. The question is, what ought to be the attitude of the church in regard to this important question of the people's play? The ill results of misdirected or undirected play are apparent. Our daily observations lead us to the conviction that something is wrong. We contend that it is not the pleasures themselves, but the way in which they are used and the conditions under which people must use them. Whether or not dancing in and of itself is an evil must be debated solely on its own ground, and not from the standpoint of what is often involved therein. A dance in a public hall where liquor is served is another consideration, and because dancing under such conditions results in disaster, it is hardly fair to condemn entirely this popular form of the people's play. The very fact that we have certain appetites and desires is an argument for their development and satisfaction. These appetites may lead us astray. This danger has been recognized, and two methods of safeguarding against such ruin are tried; one is to destroy tendencies by suppressing them; the other is to control them by discipline and careful discrimination. Hugh Black calls these two methods self-repression and self-expression. The former is the ascetic ideal. All that does not tend to this ideal we have too often classified as sin. But instead of the hard alternative of being forced to choose one or the other, of giving full sway to our desire for pleasure or amusement, or of repressing these natural desires, may we not take a middle course and determine what things are good, what things are beautiful, what things will amuse or instruct, and then use as much or as little of them as seems good for one's welfare?

This would seem to be the highest form of self-control; to be able to discriminate between the things of life and to choose the best.

The weakness in the prevailing attitude of the church is that it fails to recognize the insistence of the social demands. Its ethics have been interpreted too entirely from a personal standpoint. "If eating meat"—said St. Paul—"makes my brother to offend, I will eat no meat while the world stands." This position was heroic and splendid in Paul's day; interpreted today, it might be put in these words as expressive of the ideal attitude of each church member: "If failure to provide for the play of the people by means of playgrounds, social centers and other recreational facilities makes my brother to offend, I will exert myself to favor and to work for the establishment of these things."

The prime task for the church is to help establish a standard of recreation for the community, and then help the community to find and maintain a proper balance between work and play. No one can fail to recognize the danger that grows out of an excessive love of pleasure. In the midst of so much that is good and bad it is the duty of the church to help the people to determine what proportion of time shall be put into play that is good, and what proportion into work that is worth while. The craze for pleasure too often exercises itself, not in wholesome relaxation from work, but in excitement growing out of the whirl of senseless amusements, which leaves a person bankrupt physically, mentally and morally.

One difficulty is that our play is not democratic enough. One part of the people play too much and another part have no opportunity for play. For the wealthy, money provides the means of pleasure. The automobile and the yacht give them every road and every ocean for a playground. At home the best in the theater, music and art are at their command. With these people the question is merely one of choice. To the great masses of the people, however, there is not much range of choice. Because play is thus restricted, it has become largely an expression of individualism. People are forced to work together. Means must now be provided for all to play and all to play together. That such provision is appreciated, witness the playgrounds and the motion picture shows.

Again, those who do play, play out of all proportion while they play and then work out of all proportion while they work. A man going on a vacation after a hard year in business put so much of his time and energy into his holiday that he came back to his ordinary tasks completely worn out, and had to take a rest from pleasure before he was fit to start in on his work! It is the duty of the church to educate with a view to proper proportions; to help make it possible for all people to play and to inculcate those principles that will lead to a right balance between work and play. It is much more important that the church should do these things than that it should cry out continually against the people's pleasures. Hugh Black raises the question, "Is renunciation the keynote of faith and the accredited method of entering into the fullest Christian life?" The individualist will answer this question in the affirmative. Puritanism produced some wonderful characters; men who were giants. But in producing its ideal Christian man or woman and presenting him, the sordid pitiful story of the millions who failed and went down in the struggle is not told. Democracy is interested not so much in the ideal man as in ideal men. It seeks the advancement of all, and its success must be measured by the general standard of attainment of the many rather than by the exceptional position reached by the few. Instead of putting so much emphasis upon the ascetic ideal, would it not be possible to give it a new definition? Suppose we call it for want of a better name the higher asceticism. Asceticism means primarily that method of living which is necessary for an athlete, to develop him to the highest efficiency. Asceticism in the Christian church has meant the giving up of certain things in order that the individual soul might attain to its fullest perfection of godliness as measured by mediæval mystical conceptions. The higher asceticism would demand that the necessary sacrifices be made —perhaps sacrifices of personal opinion, preconceived notions—in order that the whole of society might be developed. Thus the higher asceticism would put a new emphasis on the forces of democracy. Graham Taylor says: "Only in our own times have our religious ideals been held close enough to earth to be applicable to the local community. The community cannot fail to profit by being faced by the religious ideal of what it ought to be, and the church cannot fail to gain by having and proclaiming an ideal for its community. The final test of the capacity and right of the churches to fulfill their high function in the community

THE DEMOCRACY OF PLAY
City Playground, Newark, N. J.

is not the attitude of the people toward the church, but the willingness and capacity of the church to serve the real interest of all the people. Democracy coming to its own in local self-government, especially in the city, challenges our time with no more categorical imperative. Will the church become democratic?"

Nowhere has the church a better opportunity for constructive service than through interesting itself in the people's play. It is not enough simply to cry out against the apparent evils. More is demanded. The church must set the standard and then help the people to live according to that standard. This will mean that it must be more tolerant, more sympathetic, more appreciative of the reasons which lead the people to do the things they do in seeking amusement.

The church also faces the fact that our modern commercial system allows childhood to work for profit and play for profit, and against these conditions it must needs fight. The churches of any one district can and should lead the community in an effort to form and adopt a play program that shall be adequate and constructive, and that shall meet the needs of its entire neighborhood. This raises the question as to whether or not the church itself should provide the amusements. Such a thing ought to be done only as a protest because the community has failed to fulfil its responsibilities. Commercial amusements can be made serviceable but in order to make them so there must be a strict regulation of all dance halls, theaters, pool rooms and other places of a similar type. The best results will come from the churches in coöperation with the other forces of the community. A passive attitude is worse than an active propaganda against the evils of play without any further effort. But to be sympathetic toward the people, to appreciate their needs, to oppose those things which lower tastes and morals, and then to coöperate heartily with all the forces in the community that are helping to provide play facilities for the people—this is the program which grows out of the nature of the gospel itself, and which cannot fail to appeal to every lover of mankind.

III

PLAY AND NORMAL LIFE

CHAPTER III

PLAY AND NORMAL LIFE

THE deep-seated propensity of men and women to play proves its worth. This appetite is not less fundamental or valuable than the appetite for daily food. Man's body is neither an enemy to be fought nor an instrument to be used simply for pleasure, but is the engine by means of which the real purposes of life are to accomplished. To neglect the body is foolish, for mental ability is largely dependent upon physical condition. So much depends upon having a body fit for its tasks that it is important that we should know what to do in order to keep always up to the mark in physical efficiency. Through the medium of play this result can be best secured. Nature insists, and we grasp at every opportunity to meet its demands.

By the play of children the bodily frame is strengthened and fitted for use. The law of the child's growth demands exercise, and this its love of play secures. Every bone and muscle in the body is made strong, responsive and fitted for its task by play. Emerson, discussing the requisites for a gentleman, pointed out that first of all he must be a good animal. We might go about our play with gloomy faces if conscious of having to play in order to be healthy, but such compulsory exercise is of less value than that in which we are thoroughly interested and amused; thus, it has been said—"The great thing is to gild the pill of needful exercise with the gold of amusement." Or, as another puts it, "To play one game of tiddle-dee-winks with zest will do a man more good than to push up a five-pound dumb-bell a thousand times."

Experimentation through play also trains the senses and brings the growing boys and girls into actual touch with the world in which they are to live. Even a kitten playing with a ball is going through motions that

PLAY AROUSES NEW INTERESTS

1. Feeding the birds
2. Bird Club

will be required later in life in catching mice. Through these exercises it is becoming strong physically and the natural organs of sense are being strengthened and trained. It has been said that the sports of childhood do more to train the eyes, ears and fingers than any other means of education. Most boys find it difficult to define what they mean by their right arm other than that it is the one they use in throwing. Without the play of childhood most of our organs of sense would remain undeveloped or only partially developed.

Play also serves the needs of the intellect. It arouses new interests, recreates strained nerves, restores the mental balance, for after hours of hard and exacting mental effort brain relaxation is essential. The new science of mental health which has taken for its motto "Why worry?" bases its whole philosophy upon the principles that are involved in play. He who loses the power to lay down his work and turn aside to some light and amusing occupation is getting perilously near the limit of mental sanity. A story is told by John Cassian, the founder of monasticism in the West, concerning the Apostle John. Tradition has it that this old apostle moved to Ephesus and spent his declining years in solitude. One day a young man returning from the chase found the Apostle sitting on a bench in the shade stroking the head of a partridge which he was holding on his knee. "Is this John?" asked the young man in surprise. In reply John said, "What do you carry in your hand?" "A bow," answered the young man. "Why is it unbent?" asked John. "So that it will not lose its strength," answered the hunter. "Why then should you be surprised," said John, "if I relax?" Herbert Spencer, visiting our country in 1883, at a farewell banquet made some criticisms on American life in the course of which he pointed out the effects of overwork on character. He said: "What I have seen and heard during my stay among you has forced me to the belief that the slow change from habitual inertness to persistent activity has reached an extreme from which there must begin a counter-change and reaction. Everywhere I have been struck with the number of faces which have told in strong lines of the burdens which have had to be borne. I have been struck, too, with the large proportion of grey haired men, and inquiries have brought out the fact that with you commonly the hair begins to turn some ten years earlier than with us. Moreover, in every circle I have met with men who have suffered from nervous collapse due to stress of business, or they have named friends who have either killed themselves by overwork, been prematurely incapacitated, or wasted long periods in the endeavor to recover health. I do but echo the opinions of all observant persons to whom I have spoken that immense injury is being done by this high pressure life—the physique is being undermined."

The fight for better social conditions is taking hundreds of thousands of children out of the mills; granting to men of all industries shorter hours and more pay; is safeguarding life and making it more difficult to exploit womanhood; these changes are giving millions of people a chance for leisure and offering the opportunity for good that may come with leisure. The experience of Raymond Robins is significant as illustrating how leisure properly spent will bring hope and moral courage. When he was nineteen years old he worked in a mine in the South twelve hours a day for a dollar a day. "When the day's work was done," he says, "I used to go to my little cabin, eat, get into my bunk and sleep until the whistle blew in the morning, at six-thirty. Then I went to the pit's mouth and down into the shaft and I picked day after day, most of the time on my knees because the drift was narrow. Along about Friday, I, a young eager-hearted boy would begin to be so tired, to feel the weariness of that labor so that I wanted a chance of escape. How was I to get it? It was a little, common dirty mining town; just one place where there was even light and music and that was in the crowded saloon. I had never drunk before I came to this mining camp; had been raised on a farm; did not know the taste of liquor. I went into that saloon; I listened to the music; I threw two or three beers under my belt, and I thought I was happy. But I was not. The next morning I had a head that told me I hadn't been happy and still I would go the next week and do the same thing, not because I was bad but under the condition of things it took possession of me. Now I found myself going back physically; becoming heavy and logy. There was no sort of opportunity. Finally I went on the brake-beam to Colorado and got a job in a mine. I worked eight hours a day, got four dollars a day and worked only six days in the week. Life changed for me. I had leisure."

With more leisure there is a better opportunity for decent, clean and wholesome play. This had fully as much to do with the change in this man's life, fitting him for his useful and far-reaching work, as his studies. The pastor of one of the Atlanta churches was called to officiate at a funeral in the mill district. Looking into the face of the dead man with the deep marks, the weazened features and the emaciated body, the pastor judged that he must have been forty or forty-five years of age, and was greatly surprised to learn, after the service was over, that he had officiated at the funeral of a boy hardly eighteen years old. This young fellow was the victim of the mills: an old man before his time, dead at the very threshold of manhood. He had gone into the mills when he was nine years old and the long hours and tedious work had made play impossible.

Play is essential in developing the disposition. A morose, sour, too serious-minded person is likely to be one who was robbed of play-time as a child. Play brings a sparkle into the eyes, color into the cheeks, joy into the disposition. It is intended that the impulse in children to play shall so quicken pleasurable emotions as to make all of life glad and fill the days with joy. Spontaneity and enthusiasm are essential to the highest intellectual development. Without these qualities a person may be good, but he can hardly attain the highest reaches of character. A cheerful spirit and a sympathetic interest in men and affairs will carry a person far. Play cultivates these happy qualities. It tends to drive out a petty fault-finding spirit and creates a disposition to be companionable and easily pleased.

One of the shallow criticisms of our times is that "we have gone pleasure mad." This is only a half truth. Some people are spending too much time in seeking amusement, but the millions are forced to take life too seriously. Our extreme devotion to business, under the dictates of a false standard of success, makes it easy to run into excess in everything we undertake. It is said of that all-influential individual known as "the tired business man" that at night he chases his pleasures with the same zeal as his dollars by day, and it might be added he is often as selfish and relentless in the pursuit of the one as of the other. The successful man or woman, however, is frequently one who has allowed the more serious side of existence to crowd out all that is bright and cheerful. The criticism made on our American life that we take our pleasures too seriously has an element of truth in it. This disposition led De Tocqueville to say: "I thought that the English constituted the most serious nation on the face of the earth but I have since seen the American and have changed my opinion. An American instead of going in a leisure hour to dance merrily at some place of public resort as the fellows of our calling continue to do throughout the great part of Europe, shuts himself up at home to drink. He thus enjoys two pleasures: He can go on thinking of his business and he can get drunk by his own fireside."

A disposition to please and be pleased is one of the greatest possible assets for character as well as for success. Play enables one "to make a life," without play it is conceivable that one might make a living.

The new psychology teaches us that man is a unit. Body and mind are inter-dependent. Instead of body and mind both being of questionable value, and the soul the only thing worth while, we have learned that a man's character is determined largely by the quality of his mental and physical powers. Just as play develops physical and mental strength and gives the right turn to the disposition, so it stimulates moral growth. School athletics have played an important part in recreating the so-called bad boys and making them good. The athletic badge test instituted in many of the schools has had a wonderful effect in bettering discipline. This test is a form of athletics that gives every boy an opportunity to win and bring himself up to the prescribed physical standard, nor is it necessary for him to defeat other boys in order to win. A New York school where these standards were adopted had previously gained a bad reputation because of disorder and lack of discipline. The effort to win the badges and the necessary physical training transformed the school and brought about an astonishing revolution. A story is told of one boy who was an inveterate cigarette smoker. No teaching or warning could induce him to give up the habit which was undermining his health and destroying his mind and character. After his third trial to gain the coveted button the director of play casually asked—"By the way, Joe, do you use cigarettes?" "Of course I do," he replied, "but that's got nothing to do with me not getting the badge." "Perhaps not," said the director, "I was just asking for information." The boy tried in the next test and failed. Crestfallen he sought the director and asked him if he really thought that cigarettes had any thing to do with his failure. "I am sure I can not say," said the director. "I have known them to interfere with the success of athletes. If you could give them up it might be worth trying, but of course you are so addicted to the habit that you could not stop even if you wanted to." "Who said I can't give them up?" was the angry retort. "Nobody," replied the director, "but having smoked so long I just imagined you couldn't." "You will see," was the reply and sure enough he stopped smoking and at the next trial, six months later, won his badge.

Again it is play that develops the finer qualities such as justice and fair play. A boy who learns in early life to take defeat gracefully, who assumes the sportsman's attitude toward a vanquished contestant and who scorns to strike below the belt, is almost certain later to bring these admirable characteristics into the more serious affairs of life. Play has been called "the recruiting office, the drill master, of all the physical, mental and moral powers." Nature has an effective way in her school of securing the exercise which is needed to develop the mental and bodily powers. "She crowds the activity full of enjoyment" and then gives her children freedom for the widest choice in selecting the play that will best meet and fill the needs.

Warren H. Wilson says of the untoward conditions of country life: "It is the common opinion of rural leaders that country life in America has fallen out of repair. The household, the church, the school and the store in the country show the effect of change. They are not what they were one hundred years ago. These changes are seen all over the United States with slight local variations. They are uniform from Maine to the Mississippi. Young people are leaving the country for the city. Teachers of country schools move almost every year, and many ministers have despaired of the country church." Our age is being dominated in a great degree by the social spirit. We have learned to do things in coöperation. The cities have been developed by coöperative effort. Commerce, business education, in fact all the interests of life have felt the impulse of the growing sense of solidarity.

COUNTRY HOME

A COUNTRY ROAD

The individualist is at a disadvantage. Hence when we come to a rural district and find individualism still strong and flourishing we are not surprised to find also its ill effects. The farmer is proud of his independence: he stands by himself and for himself; he will not readily coöperate, and it is very difficult to get him to follow a leader. This individualism partially accounts for the decay in rural America. The strongest and ablest men and women in the older communities have moved out and peopled the new frontier. The boy finishing school looks for his opportunity not on the farm but in the city. He is thinking of himself and his future and rarely considers what will be the result if all the brightest and best men and the most capable young people leave the country districts. Quoting Wilson again: "American life is still affected by pioneer days. The pioneer was lonely in his way of life and he was lonely in his thoughts; he had to work and fight for himself so he prayed for himself. Self protection was his battle all day long and soul salvation was his thought at night. He wrought and fought all the week that he might survive, and on Sunday he craved only to hear how he might survive death. Other men have the same thought but the pioneer had it to the exclusion of nearly all social feelings. The individualist has this exclusive care of his own soul, his own children, his own property, his own pleasures. So deep seated is this evil in American rural life that it is the foe to the progress of people in the open country."

The pleasures of the country are largely individual. Hunting, fishing and most of the other pleasures and games are founded upon the ideal of individualism. Over against the country we have the city with its socialized life; its offer of pleasure. The glare of the lights makes life in the city appear a happy state of existence to the boy and the girl of the rural district living monotonous routine lives without much companionship or many chances of pleasure. In the decade from 1900 to 1910 the population of the United States increased 21 per cent., and during the same period the increase in rural districts was only 11.2 per cent. The decrease, or slow increase, in the rural population throughout large sections of the country is due to social rather than economic conditions. No great improvement will be made in rural conditions until the people are taught to play together. Under the new conditions which face the country, with the lure of the city always before the eyes, there must be more interest in organized play. This is fundamental to the reconstruction of rural life, and is absolutely essential to the growth and development of moral conditions. Fiske thinks the reason that farmers can not coöperate more successfully is because they have never learned team work in play as boys. McNutt tells of his experience in a rural district where he went to serve as pastor for a summer. One of the young lads he met said to him: "This neighborhood is so dry socially that if you should touch a match to it it would burn up quickly." This boy's busy week of thirteen hours a day and the necessary work that he had on Sunday is typical of the average conditions in farm life. During the busy season there is so much work to be done that the people find no time for pleasure. Then during the winter time they are so shut in and there is so little to do that life is equally monotonous. Thus the whole year becomes a succession of days with the same tasks to perform, the same interests, until gradually the outlook narrows and the interest in life becomes small. In some of the western states the majority of the inmates in the insane asylums are farmers' wives, brought there by the very monotony of the life they are forced to lead. In the new conditions under which we are living today with the telephone, the telegraph, and the daily papers brought by the rural carriers even to the most out-of-the-way places, people learn of what is going on in the world. These blessings of civilization ought to relieve the monotony of country life and in many places this result is being secured; but this is not always true—in many localities this touch with the outside world only accentuates the monotony and breeds a spirit of restlessness. Warren Wilson in making a survey of the rural districts of Pennsylvania, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri and Kentucky found everywhere the same need of recreative activities. "Generally throughout the farming population it was discovered that no common occasion or common experience fell to the country community. In the course of the year there is in thousands of farming communities no single meeting that brings all of the people together. The small town has its fireman's parade; to the small city comes once a year the circus and to the larger city comes the exposition. Every year there is some common experience that welds the population, increases acquaintance and intensifies social unity. The tillage of the soil in these farming communities is very lonely."

It is important for every moral consideration that people living in the country districts should be contented and have a chance to live normal lives. The present isolation and hardships of life in the open country when compared to the opportunities for economic advancement and pleasure in the city cause a revulsion of feeling, especially in the life of the young, which leads them to abandon the farm just as soon as they have an opportunity. "I hope I shall never see that dreary old ranch again," was the comment of a young girl who was spending her first year in the city. From a material standpoint she and her family were better off in the country; but the cramped quarters, the sense of nearness to people, together with the recreational opportunities and amusements offered by the city gave her a touch of life that she had craved for years. She is typical of thousands of wide-awake young boys and girls to whom present conditions of rural life are simply unbearable. A New England farmer has three boys who have amazed their neighbors by staying on the farm. One of them has married and put up his house on an adjoining farm. The father some years ago called his boys into counsel, telling them that the farm was a family business, and suggested that they consider themselves as partners in the enterprise. By mutual consent they decided that eight hours should constitute a day's work. They borrowed money, put in up-to-date machinery, fixed up the house, making it modern, then they bought an automobile and on Saturday afternoons and frequently during the week they drove twelve miles to the near-by city. The boys became the active spirits in organizing sports among the boys and men of the surrounding farms.

Contrast the wisdom and sanity of this plan with that of another farmer who refused to let his boy have Saturday afternoon off to join other boys in the neighborhood in forming a baseball club. "Baseball," he shouted, "what in tarnation do you want to play baseball for? Don't you get enough exercise during the week?" The country life of America will never become what it ought to be until the people are made more democratic by learning to play together. "The great asset of recreation in the country is the opportunity to meet and talk. The problem is purely one of play, not of exercise. Recreation is essential to the moral life of any people. It is the constructive method of making individuals into good citizens. Especially valuable is it as a means of educating the young people of the working people of the community. The craving for this social training and ethical experience drives many out of the rural districts. Conversely training in social morality is to be undertaken especially by the Church which possesses the conscience of the country community. This training is expressed in the one phrase: the promotion of recreation."

If we note great changes in the rural districts how much greater are the changes in the city. The modern city is the product of the steam-driven machine, and is the reflex of the country. The cities have grown large just in proportion to the size of their factories. About these huge buildings used for commercial purposes the people have come in hordes to work in the factories and to live in the adjacent tenements. The city furnishes light, water, pavements, rules and regulations governing life and gives very little opportunity for the individual to choose for himself what he will do. Most of his choices are settled for him by the statutes and laws governing the city. The one thing that the city has not been careful about is providing opportunities and facilities for the people's play. Shrewd men, often without any moral scruples, have seen this opportunity created by the city's neglect and have entered the field offering people all sorts of opportunities for pleasure of kinds and at prices that will suit the taste, the curiosity and the pocketbook of all. A quaint old back-woods preacher in Illinois stated it about right when he preached a sermon occasioned by the going away of two of the young people of the community, who were starting East to school. In the course of his sermon he said: "Beware of the city. I tell you it is simply one of Satan's hooks baited with tempting morsels at which young fools are very apt to nibble." Life in the city is regulated by the factory and the rules of the factory. Modern industry settles the most important questions, such as, the house we must live in; the conditions under which we live; the hours we shall work; *where* we shall spend our leisure. The only thing it ignores is the question of *how* we shall spend our leisure. Here it shirks its responsibility; and this is by all odds one of the most important questions that we have to face. Instead of the home being the center of activity most working people live in the factory. They rest and eat at home so that they may be fit for the demands of the factory. Michael M. Davis, writing of the exploitation of pleasure in New York says of the city: "The home shrinks to a nest of boxes tucked four stories in the air, or the half of a duplex house huddled among its neighbors. There is space to sleep and eat but not to live. The habitation becomes a sleeping box, an eating den. Too often no more. Specialized industry, the basis of the modern city, makes it possible for large numbers of people to live and support themselves within a restricted area. This crowding of population creates a human pressure under which most of the normal tendencies of life must find new forms, or at least new modes of manifestation. This is a result of the mere fact that the physical limits of space fall so far beneath the minimum of human demands for self-expression."

System is the one essential of success in industry. There are certain definite processes that must be done in a definite way. A fixed number of hours are devoted to the same task, day after day, year in and year out. Go into any factory and see the process; get acquainted with those who are doing the work and you will find how inevitably the worker comes to think of himself as a part of the machine.

Jane Addams, pointing out the strain of changed conditions brought about by the city, says: "Industrialism has gathered together multitudes of eager young creatures from all quarters of the earth as the labor supply for the countless work-shops upon which the present industrial city is based. Never before in civilization have such numbers of young girls been suddenly released from the protection of the home, and permitted to walk unattended on city streets, and to work under alien roofs; for the first time they are being prized more for their labor powers than for their innocence, their tender beauty and ephemeral gaiety. Society cares more for the products they manufacture than for their immemorial ability to reaffirm the charm of existence. Never before have such numbers of young boys earned money independently of the family life and felt themselves free to spend it as they choose. The stupid experiment of organizing work and failing to organize play has of course brought about a fine revenge."

Industrialism, with its system, pays a premium on monotony. The same process carried on for nine or ten hours a day, especially if it be a process as simple as pasting labels, tending a machine, or doing any one of a thousand things that are demanded in the modern factory, is so deadening that immediately when the worker is released he seeks some excitement. Formerly work had in it an element of recreation. An old gentleman, past eighty years of age, boasted before a state committee investigating child labor that when he was a boy twelve years old he went to work, therefore, he thought it was nonsense to take the children under fourteen out of the modern factory. There is all the difference in the world between a boy working with his father in America seventy years ago and the modern boy working ten hours a day in a factory. Our close attention to business and the monotony of the industrial life makes its imperative demands. After the day's toil when the thousands of workers are released and have their few hours of leisure, what are they to do? We are saying today that our country has gone mad on the subject of amusements. Rather say we have been mad for years on the subject of work and the efforts of the people to find amusement is simply the inevitable reaction.

How are the people to play? That is the problem that faces us whenever we think of the changed conditions under which we are living. The city street is the play-ground. Released from the factory the crowds drift down the street seeking their pleasure. The boys and girls play their games here because very often it is the only place they can play. Their games are such as can be developed under the cramped conditions that they find in the street. A game of ball would be much more enjoyable played in a vacant lot, or in a large back yard, but as these places are not available the street is the chosen place. The policeman on his beat is looked upon as the natural enemy of all sport and an eye must be kept open for the "cop" at all times. Harmless sports because they are forbidden easily give place to more vicious practices. Later the street becomes the highway to other places of pleasure. The saloon, the pool-room, the theater, the dance hall, the moving picture show, the candy shop, the penny arcade, all of these are a part of the people's play opportunities. Most of them are bad, some of them are of questionable value, a few of them may be good, but they are all provided because it is profitable to cater to the people's love of play. If the dollars fail, the saloon closes and the lights are dimmed in the pool-room.

The people's play in all of our cities is in the hands of men who are interested only in profits and who are for the most part indifferent, careless and morally callous in regard to the moral and social effect of the amusements offered. The gaudy, the cheap, the loud, the noisy, the subdued and the elegant every type of play facility is offered and people seek out these to escape the crowded turmoil of the street, to get away from the humdrum existence of factory and shop and to escape the discomforts of home for a few hours of leisure. Commercial enterprise and good business sense are thus doing what the city has failed to do. The business that provides for the people's pleasures is big business. Lindsay in "The Beast" shows how other big business is closely affiliated with commercialized recreation. Our success in organizing work and at the same time leaving unscrupulous money grabbers to provide for the people's recreation is creating havoc. To quote from Jane Addams: "The love of pleasure will not be denied and when no adequate provision is made for its expression it turns into all sorts of malignant vicious appetites. Seeing these things the middle aged become quite distracted and resort to all sorts of restrictive measures. We often seek to dam up the sweet fountain itself because we are affrighted by these turgid streams, but although we vex ourselves with restrictive measures and complain of their futility we do not see that the city itself has failed in its object in the matter and that the root of the difficulty is due to the fact that the modern city has turned over to commercialism practically all the provisions for public recreation." To quote again from Davis' report on exploitation of pleasure in New York: "Modern industry and its product, the modern city, create home conditions which for the mass of the people are too crowded and too ill arranged to permit the enjoyable spending of time within the home. Recreation for the most part must be sought elsewhere. Commercial enterprise taking advantage of the opening thus created has developed recreation provisions to a wonderful extent, furnishing opportunities adapted to every age and to every grade of intellect artistic and moral development."

The saloons offer an easy and convenient opportunity for recreation. The liquor interests have built up a mighty system and in most of our large cities the best street corners are preëmpted by the saloon. Men do not go to the saloon solely for the pleasure of drinking. Liquor drinking of course is one reason for their going, but it is the social life and the opportunity for recreation that the saloon offers that makes it so popular. Alcohol develops good feeling, gives men a desire to talk, and when taken moderately, the ability to converse pleasingly, hence from the earliest times some kind of liquor has been used in connection with social gatherings. In modern times the saloon has capitalized this agelong custom and has surrounded the mere drinking of liquor with the means for enjoying sociability and fellowship. Jack London says: "The news-boys on the streets, the sailor, the miner and the wanderer in far lands, always where men came together to counsel, it was always to laugh and boast and dare, to relax, to forget the dull tiresome nights and days, and always they came together over alcohol. The saloon was the place of congregation." To the poor man

Courtesy of O. G. Lundberg,
Staff Photographer, Chicago Tribune

SCHOOL ATHLETICS PLAY

Interscholastic Track Meet, Chicago, 1914

the saloon is his club, his social center. "Here he finds relaxation after the long day in the dust and roar of the factory such as the crowded and slouchy rooms he calls home will not furnish. Here he can escape the crying children and get the companionship of men interested in the same things he is. There are games, cards, pool, reports from the baseball games, races and prize fights, sometimes music, and a warm place in which to enjoy them. There is no feeling of constraint, on the contrary the manager is glad to have him remain so long as he is spending money. All these enjoyments may be purchased for an evening at the exceedingly small price of a few beers, or even a single glass, with a free lunch thrown in. The saloon is a democratic institution open freely to every one and criticising no one."

The dance hall is usually controlled by the same type of men who control the saloon. Surveys in New York, Kansas City, Chicago, Cleveland and other large cities show that there is a very close relationship between the dance halls and the saloons. It is this fact that makes dancing so dangerous. Thousands of young people who enjoy dancing and to whom there is no other opportunity open for recreation and amusement find their way into the public dance hall, going there with the best intentions in the world, after the long day at pasting labels, dipping candy, wrapping bundles, or some such occupation fatiguing to the body and which starves the imagination. It is natural for them to crave the kind of excitement that the dance offers. The Juvenile Protective Association in Chicago found—"the conditions existing in the dance halls and in adjacent saloons transform the entirely innocent desire for the dance and for social enjoyment into drunkenness, vice and debauchery. Saloon-keepers and prostitutes are in many cases the only chaperons and in a majority of the places even the young girls and boys fresh from school are plied with alcohol and with suggestions of vice until dancing ceases to be recreation and becomes flagrant immorality."

Next to the dance halls in interest are the theaters and moving picture shows, poolrooms, candy shops and cigar stores. They are also offering the chance for the people to play. There is no opportunity for choice, and few people in the community have the money, the leisure and the good taste necessary to provide themselves and their families with the right kind of play facilities.

Commercialized play facilities are not necessarily bad in and of themselves. Most people prefer to pay their way and there is no complaint because of the cost. Nor should we judge a group of men harshly simply because they have made a good business venture. The point is that the play facilities should be in the hands of all the people. When people danced at home the problem of dancing was individual. Under present conditions dancing is a social problem. So with every feature connected with this problem. Our cities have been stupid in organizing industry and not organizing play. When they come to interest themselves primarily in the welfare of men, women and children, when they put the needs of humanity first, then great changes will be seen. But so long as a city is content to leave provision for the people's play in the hands of private enterprise it should at least see that these hands are clean, and that the forms of recreation are safe.

IV

DANGERS AND DISASTERS

CHAPTER IV

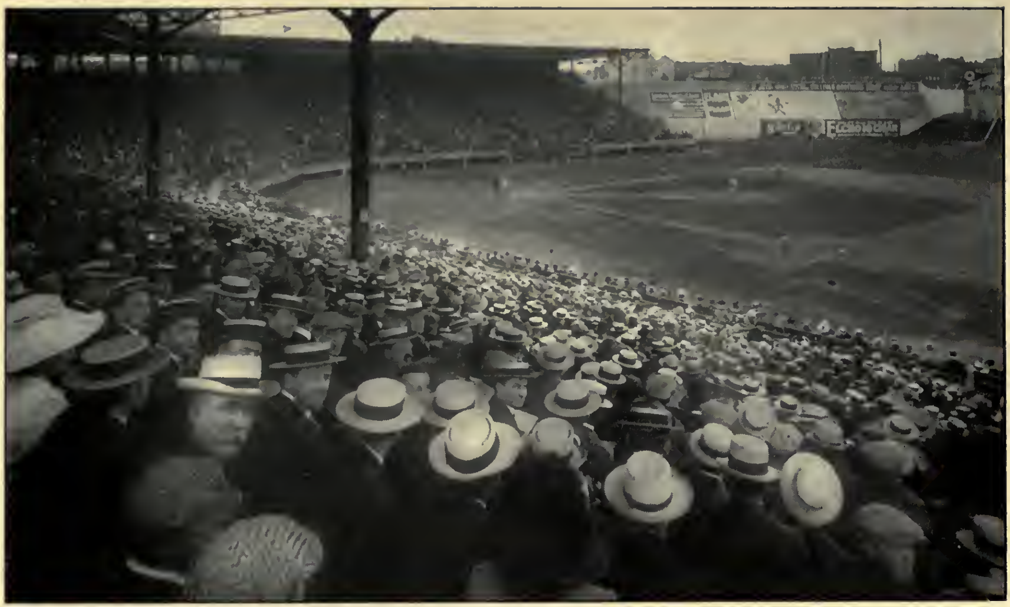
DANGERS AND DISASTERS

THE pastor of a church located in the midst of a city's most congested part was called out of bed early one morning by the police and requested to come to the station where they had locked up a seventeen-year-old girl who was taken in a raid made upon a neighboring lodging house. Her home was in a well-to-do suburb and her people had known the minister, hence when she got into trouble she asked the police officers to send for him. He was able to secure her release and send her home. Her people were very religious and lived a quiet life. There was little for her to do each day after returning home from work in the city where she had been employed since her graduation from high school the year before. She frequently attended parties at a dance hall in the village against the wishes of her parents, who were very much opposed to dancing, card playing and theater going. At this dance hall she met a man who became attentive to her and at last at his suggestion she ran away with him and came to the city to be married. They had been living in a lodging house for nearly a week and every day the marriage had been put off. The police raided the place, and thus her pitiful story was made public.

This girl had lived a repressed life and repression is often disastrous. "How could my daughter go to these public dances? She has deceived us all. It seems impossible that she should have become acquainted with such a man. Who is he? I never heard of him." Such was the naive protest of the mother. "The repressed girl, if she is not of the languishing type," says Jane Addams, "is very apt to take things into her own hands." In this case the young woman found her pleasure in illicit ways and came to harm because she was denied an opportunity for sane, reasonable amusement.

A lesson may be drawn from this incident to show that the city is to blame for allowing places to exist where a young girl could be betrayed with such ease. The city does come in for a share of blame for its carelessness. Another lesson, and that most frequently drawn, is that the dance is a bad thing and that young people should be urged to refrain from dancing, for, unless they do so, they are in immediate danger of being lost. Both these lessons are important. A city is often criminally neglectful about caring for its children and there are dangers which grow up in a ball room. But neither a disreputable part of the city, nor dancing, is to be held wholly accountable for this disaster. It is folly to assume that in the quiet monotony of a God-fearing neighborhood young people will be satisfied to spend their evenings at home doing nothing, or at most reading, or will find sufficient pleasure in attending church services. In a study made of a suburban community it was found that the people were cordial, well educated and refined; they were of the upper middle class, most of the men working in the city and earning good salaries; their homes were comfortable and many of them elaborate in architecture and arrangement. The community was well supplied with churches and school-houses: and altogether life there was said to be pleasant. The investigator made his first visit on a Saturday evening. As he alighted from the train another train pulled out for the city. It was loaded with young men and women going to the theaters and other places of amusement. In twenty minutes they would find light, music and all the attractions that the city had to offer. They had left behind them a rather gloomy suburban town where the lights were totally inadequate to dispel the darkness and where at nine o'clock almost every light was extinguished. When the policeman was asked why the town was not better lighted, he replied: "What's the use? Everybody stays at home or goes to the city at night, those who go to the city don't need the lights and those who stay at home go to bed." The few stores on the main street were mostly deserted. In the corner drug store a group of half a dozen boys were talking; on the opposite corner was a similar group who had stopped for a moment on their way to the near-by pool-room. As they entered they were greeted by a dozen boys already in the place playing at the two battered tables. The room was long and narrow, the floor filthy, looking as if it had never been cleaned. There were four electric lights burning, but the globes were so dirty that the lights were yellow and feeble. The evening was cold and raw; the only means of heating was a stove which had had a fire in it early in the day, but the fire was out! Nearly everyone in the room wore his overcoat. Two of the boys had hung up their coats but the minute they finished the game they put them on again. The two pool tables had evidently seen hard service and did not set level. The small price charged by the manager was promptly paid, and as one game was finished another began. Almost all the boys played, or had a chance to play, during the evening. An especially attractive fellow said that he was a senior in the local high school. His father had a position in the city. When asked why he came to spend the evening in such a place he replied: "There is no other chance for a fellow to have any fun, except at the bowling alley." The bowling alley was across the street in the basement of a rather pretentious building. It was a very attractive place, clean, well ventilated, with fine lights and the alleys in good condition for playing. There were three groups here; six or eight older men; ten or twelve high school boys; five or six lads from twelve to fourteen years of age. Boys younger than twelve years were not allowed to enter. At the back window three eager faces were pressed against the glass. These were boys who had just been denied admittance because "You kids ain't twelve years old." The older men were doing the playing and were crack members of a local bowling club. Bowling is a favorite sport in the community and these men were practising so that the prestige of their club might be maintained. The others in the room were merely onlookers. There was a dance hall on the main street, but it was only occasionally used. One of the high school boys, a spokesman for the group, said that he did not often come to these places; Friday and Saturday nights being the only times he could go during the school year. When asked if he came to the pool room and the bowling alley because he liked them he replied: "No. But what can a fellow do? My old man comes home tired and cross and sits around the house smoking or reading the papers and wants everybody to go to bed at nine o'clock. After I graduate from High it is me for a job in the city, then good-night to such slow joints as these." Here was a boy with the best possible stuff in him, yet the monotony of the place was crushing to death his best impulses, and as a reaction against it he hugged to his heart the vision of the city with its opportunities for fun, and was just counting the days until he would be emancipated from the deadly round of suburban existence and could have his chance for "real life." His was a wrong perspective of course, but who gave it to him? This boy with all his good blood and training is in more danger from the evils which beset youth's pathway than a boy who is equally well brought up in the city. This ought not to be so, but our respectable suburban communities furnish more of the world's moral failures than would be generally imagined. It is reasonable to assume that a large number of such failures could be averted if the people of these otherwise ideal communities put as much thought on the boys' and girls' pleasures as they do on the questions of bread and butter and buildings.

The failure to provide opportunities for play, and then the failure to direct youth in its play, are not the worst phases of the situation, for in some places there is a real



Courtesy of Boston Traveler

A BASE-BALL CROWD

Boston American Ball Club at Fenway Park, Boston

antagonism to the spirit of play and the desire for pleasure when an expression of these has been attempted by young people. More than one church has been divided by a clash between the older and the younger people over the question of the use of the church building for social purposes. Good people have persistently taken a negative position on the question of play. If the popular forms of amusement are bad and we strive to remove them it is only fair that something should be put in their place. Ten boys, ranging in age from twelve to fifteen, rented two rooms in the basement of a house on a respectable street of a little "satellite" city. They paid two dollars a month for the use of the rooms and each boy brought some article of furniture, found by rummaging in the family attic, and thus furnished the club rooms. They organized with a president and secretary and charged a small sum for dues. They played dominoes, checkers and such card games as they knew, old maid and casino being very popular.

Most of the boys drew books from the local library and would bring these to the club, to read and discuss the stories. The group was not always on its good behavior. Sometimes there was "rough house," but on the whole it was as orderly and well conducted a club as could be expected under the circumstances. Instead of the neighbors seeing the possibilities for good and helping the boys to develop along right lines they began to complain of and exaggerate the things that happened. All that the boys were attempting to do was to ape their fathers and grown-up brothers who belonged to regular clubs in the city. At their luncheons the staples in the way of good things to eat were candies and pickles purchased at the corner store, with ginger ale and champagne cider for drinks. The gossips in the neighborhood finally formed a committee and went to the lady who owned the house, and to please public opinion she had to turn out the boys. This town has never had a saloon. It is the home of much temperance agitation and several members of this club were the sons of the strongest temperance advocates in the community. A few years later most of them were working in the city and they began to get together at restaurants and saloons to talk over old times. There was now no formal effort to form a club but the old gang spirit asserted itself unconsciously, and in groups they went from place to place, drinking more or less and having a gay time. The results have been tragic and show the danger of shutting out an opportunity for clean, decent, normal play, and then leaving wide open the varied mischievous city opportunities for eager boys and girls.

Another club of boys in a suburban community of much the same character called itself the Picayune Club. One of the boys having heard of sour mash brought a bottle of butter milk and assured the others that it was the real thing and they all drank it, with the feeling, that they were indeed, doing something bad,—but men drank sour mash and why not be as much like men as possible?

These fine communities express that which is best in our church life today but the monotony of the lives of many persons in the community is unrealized and is intensified by the community's poverty in recreational resources. The men for the most part find, during their work day in the city, certain pleasures and interests. The business man has his club, his group of friends. The city, with its roar and its hustle, adds to the excitement of his life. In one of the restaurants of Chicago there is a round table where for ten years the same group of business men have met for luncheon every day. Sometimes they shake dice. Some days they play a game with cubes of sugar. Each man puts a cube in front of his plate; then they make a pool of five or ten cents each and the man upon whose cube of sugar a fly first settles takes the pool. They are as interested in watching to see who is going to win this simple little game as they would be over some big turn in their business affairs. They appear to be substantial, conservative, sedate middle-aged gentlemen, who might live in Evanston, Oak Park or any one of the dozen other suburban towns and they want their boys to be just like themselves when at home. The boys, however, have been in an unnatural atmosphere most of the day and they prefer during their leisure time in the evening to be more like what their fathers were at luncheon time, and with the city only a few miles distant, they soon "learn the ropes," as they say, and find their pleasures.

In justice to the suburban community it must be said that in many places the need for more attention to play and amusement is being felt and in a large number of suburban towns splendid playgrounds are being provided, churches are building parish houses, money is being appropriated and a play program worked out, adopted and made effective.

If such a picture of the suburban community, the village and small town is not over drawn, what shall we say of the city? The dangers here are two-fold: that from the wrong sort of amusement, and that from a lack of supervision of the people's play. It is an easy thing to lose yourself in the city. Nobody knows you and few people care anything about you. You can do as you please and no one is the wiser. The city is made up of newcomers. People come and people go. The city serves all and each finds the things which are congenial to him and his kind. The larger cities have a larger percentage of growth in the majority of cases than the smaller cities, because people love the crowd and enjoy losing themselves in the midst of it. The city makes communication between individuals easy, but at the same time it lessens the necessity for such communication. While there are more people to be known there are fewer that can be known. It is estimated that in one section of Chicago about twelve thousand students rent rooms every autumn and begin their studies in the medical and dental colleges and other schools. In the same neighborhood thousands of clerks, stenographers, book-keepers and other young people who have just come to the city find their homes. Thousands of young married people each year begin house-keeping in this district. It is within walking distance of the business center; only a few blocks from the lake and is a most desirable location for people of limited means. Large numbers of these people get their meals at restaurants. The dance hall, the theatre and the moving picture shows in the neighborhood are crowded night after night. One young man at a dance confided to a casual friend that he was in the habit of attending the dance hall three nights a week in the hope of getting acquainted with some girl, so that he might have "some one to run around with." He lived in a rooming house, took his meals at an adjacent restaurant and spent his leisure time reading, dropping into an occasional picture show, until he happened to hear of this dance hall, where, he understood, "the bunch of girls who came were most of them straight." Jane Addams speaking of these places says: "One of the most pathetic sights in the public dance halls of Chicago is the number of young men, obviously honest young fellows from the country, who stand about vainly hoping to make the acquaintance of some 'nice girl.' They look eagerly up and down the rows of girls, many of whom are drawn to the hall by the same keen desire for pleasure and wholesome intercourse which the lonely young men themselves feel." The difficulty in the situation is that mingled with the crowd of "decent young fellows" are boys and men who have come here for the worst possible reasons, and among the girls, the majority of whom are honest and are simply seeking and finding pleasure, there are numbers of the bad sort. It is these who make the dance hall a positive danger to both boys and girls. The cities of our country spend a hundred times as much for juvenile reform as they do for providing recreational opportunities.

The boy's love of adventure leads him into trouble. It has been shown that most of the crimes for which boys are arrested may be traced to this spirit which prompts them to seek excitement. The boy who plays truant from school often finds that he does not know what to do with his time. He is simply defying custom and is pitting his wits against those of the truant officer. Jumping on and off trains and street cars, flagging trains, beating his way from one place to another on trains, these things the boy attempts just for the fun of the doing and the going and to see if he can do them without being caught. Jane Addams shows how this spirit runs through the whole gamut of youthful exploits. She thinks that the love of excitement and the desire to get rid of the humdrum experiences of life induce boys to experiment with drinks and drugs. The difficulty of securing cocaine, the subterfuges to which the seller has to resort to deliver the goods, the system of signals, the hiding places, the method of spending the money, all of these appeal to the boy's love of adventure. When a person becomes addicted to the use of a drug its demands are so insistent and it so enslaves the will that the victim will go to any lengths to get it. An investigation made by residents of Hull House regarding the condition of a gang of boys who lived in a neighboring street revealed the following: there were eight of them, the oldest being seventeen years of age, the youngest thirteen. They all lived vagrant lives. It was found that cocaine had one day been offered to them by a colored man who was acting as agent for a drug store. He urged them to try it. In three of four months they became hopelessly addicted to its use, and at the end of six months, when they were discovered by their Hull House friends, they were found to be in a sad state physically, mentally and morally. Not one of them was going to school or working. They stole, pawned their clothes, or did any other desperate thing in order to "get the dope." They had to have it. It was the spirit of adventure, which under proper conditions might have expressed itself in normal play, that brought their downfall.

In every great city there are hundreds of gangs of boys, the total membership of which would run into the thousands. Most of the members of these gangs are from ten to eighteen years of age. Many of the members sooner or later come into clash with the police and find their way into the juvenile court. Most people know about the gangs but they fail to recognize the spirit which is operating them, and either attempt to break them up or to restrict their operations, instead of trying to utilize the spirit which brings the boys together and direct it into proper channels. One illustration out of many may be given: Webb was a young and desperate criminal in Chicago. He and his companions killed a policeman and carried on a regular campaign of robbery, terrorism and murder. When he was arrested his mother could not believe that her boy was the one for whom the whole police force of the city had been searching. He was the product of a Chicago gang. He, with other boys, had met in alleys, in barns or in holes that they dug in the sand banks near the city. Out of the innocent club with which they started they developed into criminals.

It has been found that the most dangerous period for a boy is the time when he is approaching twelve years of age. Up to that time he plays in the house; his hours can be made interesting and his mind occupied. At about the age of twelve his tastes change; he needs different kinds of amusements and better opportunities for play. In the congested districts of a city he cannot find what he needs. Outside of his home is a vacant lot, an alley, a deserted shop or ware-house and here he meets others like himself. Coming together, the desire to organize expresses itself, and the gang be-

VOLLEY BALL

Boys at Play in Tomkins Square, New York City

comes a compact body, ready for adventure. What shall they do? The boys of the newly formed club thrown on their own resources for play let their imaginations run wild and the first opportunity that presents itself for fun is eagerly followed up. They plan expeditions and start out for some wonderful adventure. Here is an unoccupied house; its windows make a good target for stones; its doors can be broken down; its lead pipes and trimmings find a ready sale at the junk shop which one of the members of the gang knows about on the next block; the sale of this junk gives them ready money and they begin hunting for unoccupied houses for the purpose of raiding them. With this money they can buy cigarettes and learn to smoke. They have the means now so that they can "shoot craps," and so the spirit of the gang expresses itself and the boys are led on from one step to another, often in conflict with the law. The policeman becomes the deadly enemy of the gang and its pranks. A member of one of these gangs who arrives at the age of twenty without becoming a hardened criminal is fortunate indeed. The gang may be broken up by the police, but the spirit which creates the gang must be considered by others than the police. The community is responsible and the church is responsible for the education of the community spirit so that men and women will learn that it is not a bad thing for boys to have their clubs. In fact organization among them is advisable, and boys and girls should be encouraged in forming their clubs. The thing to do is to keep close watch of the club, provide the right kind of supervision for it and see that the spirit of the young people expresses itself along normal lines. If you give adequate opportunities for play the children of the street will learn to use their brains and will expend the same amount of energy along helpful constructive lines as they are now giving to the harmful adventures of the gang. The danger of unorganized play in the city streets is great, and the disasters from misdirected play can scarcely be exaggerated. The desperate car-barn bandits of Chicago robbed and murdered just for the excitement of the thing. Their crimes were the result of their misdirected play. During the year 1913 there were 9,019 children arraigned in the County Children's Court of New York. The report of this court during this period, with its charts and statistical tables, shows the principal reasons why boys and girls go wrong; 25 per cent. were brought into court for trifling offenses; 38 per cent. because of improper guardianship. This leaves only 37 per cent. who were charged with really serious offenses. It was the spirit of adventure ruled by a gang that made most of these juvenile delinquents. Over 54 per cent. of the children were shown to have done the thing that brought them into conflict with the law through their associations. The residential distribution shows that much of the trouble was due to bad housing and community conditions. Another point of interest made clear by this report is that the years between thirteen and fifteen are the years when most of the boys and girls get into trouble.

The Juvenile Protective Association of Chicago made a study of the conditions of the colored people of that city and in their report stated that there are and have been in the county jail a disproportionate number of colored boys and young men as compared with the number of white boys and men. The colored people of Chicago approximate only one-fortieth of the entire population, and yet one-eight of the boys and young men and nearly one-third of the girls and young women who are confined in the county jail are found to be negroes. While the morality of every young person is closely bound up with that of his family and his immediate environment, this is especially true of the sons and daughters of colored families, who, finding the door of opportunity continually shut in their faces, are more easily forced back into their early environments however vicious and disastrous to morals they may be. In a study of one hundred colored families it was found that eighty-six of the mothers went out to work. This left no adequate provision for the care of the children during the day. The older children were kept at home from school to care for the younger ones and in many cases the whole family was locked out of the house to play in the street until the mother returned in the evening. Naturally these children, being denied better opportunities, are soon contaminated by the worst influences of the street. The doors to the best forms of recreation and play are closed to the members of this race. The love of music so strong among the colored people finds opportunity for satisfaction only in the cheaper vaudeville shows, amusement parks and the lowest type of theaters. That which should be the greatest source of inspiration tends to pull them down, for their love of pleasure, lacking innocent expression, draws many of them to the vice district. An effort was made by some worthy colored people on the south side of the city to establish a modern dance hall. The white people of the district, assuming that it would be an objectionable place, successfully opposed it as a public nuisance and this effort toward better recreational facilities was abandoned. There is no bathing beach in the city where the colored children can enjoy the waters of Lake Michigan. The white children do not welcome them at their beaches. The report tells of a little colored boy who attempted to bathe at the Thirty-ninth Street beach and was mobbed and treated so roughly that the police had to send in a riot call. The commercial amusements in the neighborhoods where the colored people live are of the lowest type, including pool rooms, saloons and disreputable dance halls. In concluding this report the investigators state that there are two reasons for the large proportion of colored boys in the county jail: bad conditions under which the people live, and the lack of opportunity for regular organized normal play.

The annual report of the Seattle Juvenile Court for 1912, in discussing the causes of juvenile delinquency, states: "The first cause was not the fault of the child, but more likely that of the city or society in general for failing to properly supervise and assist these helpless children, carelessly permitting them to drift into bad environments and thus become delinquents, or absolute dependents." Judge Lindsay of Denver thinks it is impossible to keep street boys from shooting craps. "It is as natural for them to gamble as for other boys to play marbles." This is obviously true because this game is the easiest to learn and the one that can be played in the smallest space and with the least equipment. Given the opportunity and the privilege of playing legitimate games craps and other gambling devices would lose much of their attraction.

The report of the Massachusetts Commission on Immigration deals extensively with the question of the people's play and its relation to immorality. This Commission reports the dangerous situation which faces the men and women who are forced to live in crowded conditions, who work hard for long hours and who have no opportunity for play. It tells of a Lithuanian girl who was eighteen years of age when she arrived in this country. She worked for the first two months in a stocking factory for two dollars per week and for the next three years was in a brush factory earning seven dollars a week. She has lived in three different places since coming to this country. In the first place there were five rooms and in them a family of four, and in addition three men and two women lodgers. In the second place there were four rooms, three in the family and with them two men and two women lodgers. At the time the report was made she was living in a tenement of five rooms with a family of three who have three men and one woman lodger. "A Polish girl of nineteen, who has been in America two years working in a restaurant in Boston, lodges in an apartment of four rooms where the Polish man and his wife have four men and nine girl lodgers. She came from Europe alone expecting to be with her father, but he had gone to Canada and she was obliged to find a lodging place and begin work immediately. She has an illegitimate child by a man who was a lodger in the house and who came from the same village in Poland." So many incidents of this kind are quoted in the report as to make it evident that the problems of recreation and housing are closely bound together. The enforcement of housing regulations will reduce the overcrowding and make conditions better, but even such improvements will still leave the immigrant boy and girl open to temptations and dangers to which no young person should be exposed. The facts brought to light by this report prove that the lack of proper recreation and provision for social intercourse tend to result in immorality among young men and women of all nationalities. The danger is especially serious among non-family groups of young foreign men and women whose needs an American community cannot fully appreciate. The freedom from old forms of social control without proper social life causes much delinquency among such men and women. In studying the problem of the illegitimate child an eminent authority says: "It is felt that the failure of the ethical standards of these unfortunates is due in large measure to society itself. Society has not seen to it that adequate training in sex hygiene and sex morality be insisted upon as a public obligation, neither has society provided for the social recreation of our young people amid conditions conducive to development and conservation of the best manhood and womanhood."

Eighty-five public dances given in forty-seven dance halls in Manhattan, New York, were investigated by the agents of the Bureau of Social Hygiene from January 24th to June 24th, 1912. Ninety-six reports were made of conditions in these halls by three investigators. Only five out of seventy-five dances seen during this time were characterized as decent; eleven were more or less objectionable; fifty-five were wholly objectionable; at all the dances but three intoxicating liquors were sold; at sixty-one minors were present, and the investigators conclude that excepting those at two halls, the attendants were mostly disreputable. What was shown to be true in New York is proportionately true elsewhere. The report of the Chicago Vice Commission recommends that municipal dance halls should be established and that they should be properly policed and supervised; that city ordinances regarding moving picture shows should be revised so as to provide for the presentation of good pictures in well lighted halls; that the school yards be opened for children to play, and always under careful supervision; that the parks should be made more available and safer for the people; that the churches should endeavor to counteract evil influences in the community by opening buildings attached to churches for social centers during week-day evenings; and that better supervision be given both by public officials and parents of children and young people in their play.

To sum up then, play is a natural instinct. The nature of the individual demands play. Many people are living under new conditions and facing new problems. The opportunities to play are not adequate. Decent amusements being denied, the people turn to those agencies that provide the opportunities they are seeking, and in using these facilities they are faced with grave dangers that often result in disaster. In our shortsightedness we have condemned play. The danger does not lie in the play itself, but in the conditions and surroundings under which people are forced to play.

V

DANCING, CARD PLAYING, THEATER GOING

CHAPTER V

DANCING, CARD PLAYING, THEATER GOING

Spurgeon preached a direct sermon to the careless in his day, and in the course of it said: "Call your sins sins, but do not call them pleasures, and learn that the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season, are but Satan's bait by which he takes souls upon his hook to their destruction. You shall lose no pleasure but that which is unhealthy, unfit for your soul, unsatisfactory in itself and unworthy of your nature." This is good advice and as worthy of being heeded in our day as it was in the day it was preached. The question is, what constitutes sinful pleasures? Many persons will answer, dancing, card playing and theater going. Other things are included sometimes; for instance, in certain advice given to young Christians we find among the forbidden things, "playing at games of chance, attending theaters, horse races, circuses, dancing parties, or patronizing dancing schools or taking part in such other amusements as are obviously misleading or of questionable moral tendency." We have quibbled a great deal about this question. Those who favor these forms of amusement are often just as intolerant of any one who disagrees with them as the strictest, most Puritanical church members. Others who have been able to see both sides of the question thought that the three forms of amusement mentioned above were especially evil, and have allowed substitutes which have engrossed time and have proven to be much like the forbidden forms of amusement. Certain social games that are played by young people who would not dance are really imitations of the dance. In a church where frequent sermons were preached against dancing, the young people played "Miller" to the shouts of "Happy is the miller who lives by the mill; the mill goes round with a right good will." In another church the rule against cards was strictly enforced, but during three consecutive winters practically one-half the members in the church belonged to one or the other of half a dozen flinch clubs, and this game, which is most like the old card games of any that has been invented, was played with a zeal and devotion that would put to shame the average whist player! When a missionary exhibit was given in one of our western cities, a drama covering a portion of the life of David Livingstone was to be played at a local theater as a part of the affair. A debate took place among church people as to the propriety of supporting any thing that apparently endorsed the theater. The play was given but it was known as a "missionary pageant." Most of our judgments as to what is right and what is wrong are developed from small premises. There is no reason why the grand march should be admitted and the dance itself condemned; or why a drama under the name of pageant should be recognized as morally allowable and under the name of play be condemned. That these things are so forces us to the conviction that what we need more than any thing else is a serious study of these most popular forms of amusement in order to determine, if possible, what is good and what is bad.

The love of dancing is natural to almost every individual. It is the one art that everybody can learn and can practice with more or less success. Nearly every art today has developed out of the dance in one or another of its forms. Hence it has been called the "mother of arts."

The inherent love of rhythm is the fundamental element in dancing. This expresses itself in the unconscious movements of children. A little girl when she is happy will hop up and down or skip about in a circle clapping her hands, tossing her head, all in perfect rhythm. When a person is ill he loses the rhythm of life. As long as it can be maintained we are comfortable and happy. In our formal dances we have

THE WEAVING DANCE

Courtesy of A. T. Bolsen

THE FISHERMAN AND HIS WIFE
Presented at the Louisville, Kansas, Convocation

amplified the simple movements of childhood, repeating them in definite form of rotation, with definite changes and variations, often with a childlike expression of joy. G. Stanley Hall says that the cultivation of an appreciation of the beautiful has an effect on the working power of the brain, and influences its output to a degree that is little realized. He thinks that the dance develops the sense of the beautiful better than any other form of exercise or play. "I would have dancing taught in every school," he says, "even if the school had to be opened evenings for that purpose. The dances chosen should be simply rhythmic, allowing great freedom, such as the Morris dances now being revived; and sometimes songs and dancing. We should also teach the old folk and national dances after a very careful selection from a wide repertoire. The object aimed at should be the cultivation primarily of the sense of rhythm; next the ease and economy of motion, for grace is only the natural term for ease. Dancing originated in the religious instincts, and was a form of religious service; and is still capable of teaching awe, reverence, worship. The love of God is just as capable of motor expression as is romantic love."

Dancing is a very ancient practice, but the older forms of the dance were altogether different from the modern; in fact, the style of dancing changes with each generation. The Jews, as well as other nations, had their sacred dances which were performed at holiday seasons and on solemn occasions. Dancing is defined as "an expression of the feelings by movements of the body more or less controlled by the sense of rhythm." Even before it became an art it was practiced. Millar, writing in Hasting's Bible Dictionary, says that the ancient dance had three forms of development in the practice of the ancient nations: first, its rudest and most studied form, the outward expression of exuberant feeling; second, the pantomime dance; and third, the dance pure and simple, the exhibition of the poetry of motion, of all the grace of attitude and all the flexibility of which it is possible. Social dancing as we now understand it was almost unknown in ancient times. In the Bible the references to dancing lead us to conclude that any occasion might be celebrated with a dance—the Prodigal's return; the success of the armies; the commemoration of some great event in the national history ; the welcoming of a hero as he comes in triumph from a battle; the reception of a stranger into the tribe. The Hebrew religion was especially a joyful religion, and the dance had its place and significance among the people. On the occasion of the passage of the Red Sea, Miriam, the sister of Moses, "took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dancing." With some variation this same form of dancing is common in oriental countries today. Among primitive people the dance is connected with the ceremonials of the tribes. Among the Indians there is the snake dance, the medicine dance, the witch dance and various other dances, each of which has a definite purpose in propitiating the spirits of the tribe and bringing prosperity upon the people. In most of the ancient dancing the sexes danced separately. This was especially true among the Jews.

The dance is a favorite amusement with Americans. Just at present it is in vogue to a tremendous extent. The dance halls are crowded; during the summer season the bathers dance on the beach; it forms the diversion between the courses of the meals in many popular restaurants. The afternoon dance is a common feature offered the patrons of the principal hotels in our larger cities. Dancing schools and academies are doing the best business in their history.

Commercialism has seen its opportunity, and in every city young men and women are being exploited to their ruin because it is profitable for a group of men to furnish the opportunity for dancing, and because the good people of the community have withheld their guiding hand and the protecting influence so sorely needed.

The experience in Kansas City, in Cleveland and other cities where attempts have been made to regulate the public dance halls, as well as the experiments that have been tried in Milwaukee and Chicago in establishing municipal dance halls, have shown how very difficult it is to regulate the dance. At the same time no one need doubt that it can be done. We must think clearly and act wisely. To do this will mean that we will have to discriminate between dancing itself and the evils that grow out of it. Dancing has been called "the elixir of life." It is the most healthful and recreative of all plays. Even those who are most opposed to dancing on moral grounds are willing to admit its value as an exercise. The favorite argument of such people is that if we could separate the sexes and have a dance hall for men and one for women, they would have no objection to the dance, and would see in it only good. The modern dances are especially valuable as forms of exercise, for they bring into action every muscle of the body. Men and women who live lazy lives with very little exercise are urged by their physicians to find something that will interest them, and then devote themselves strenuously to it. Such people formerly took their exercise with dumb-bells and indian-clubs, or calisthenics. The profit from these exercises was limited for the reason that they were carried out in a perfunctory way, or because, having to perform the exercises alone and for the sake of their health, the morbid introspection thus produced caused fully as much evil as the exercise did good. A noted physician says that the modern dance offers everything for which the old physicians recommended the use of dumb-bells. In dancing the muscles are exercised, and through the exhilaration of the music and the joy of companionship the health values are greatly increased.

The latest dances have a doubtful reputation, largely because of the places and conditions where they first became popular, and because, as they are difficult to learn, their bad features rather than their best are made prominent. The great danger in dancing arises from the fact that with the dance there is the sex appeal. These new forms of the dance allow greater liberty, and as ordinarily danced are not so artistic as their older and more stately relations. To make the difference clear one needs only to witness a crowd dancing the tango and the same crowd dancing a quadrille. Because the new dance steps are more difficult to learn, only a few people dance correctly. In the halls where the one-step is allowed, hardly a couple really dances; for the most part, they merely slip, slide, dip and walk about over the floor; thus is given a greater opportunity for familiarity than was possible with the older dances, and this familiarity too often degenerates into coarse and even indecent conduct. But it is interesting to note that when danced under proper auspices the objectionable features of these dances have been dropped.

There is no inherent reason why these steps, if properly executed, should be more dangerous to morals than the old forms of dancing. It is all a matter of education, training and regulation. Go to any well regulated dance hall, one for instance, in Minneapolis or Seattle, where possibly a thousand couples may be dancing at once; study the eager faces of the young people gathered about the dance floor; mingle with the crowd and get acquainted with some of these boys and girls; note them in the midst of the dance; there are some who are bad—no one doubts this—and some who have come for vile purposes; but the observer will find that the vast majority of these eager young people have come to this place of amusement impelled by the "spirit of youth," because of their love of music and because in their lives there is so little opportunity for enjoyment. As they dance the new dances there is shown an intelligent respect for that which is pure and good. Ask almost any boy who is in the habit of attending dances in a certain dance hall, and he will tell you the names of and point out the girls of questionable morality, if there are any such present, and at the same time, with all the vigor of his nature, he will defend against insult or even slur the girls whom he knows to be pure and decent. The pity of it all is that these right impulses cannot be conserved and made of service in the community life.

Dancing is the expression of feeling by means of motion. The moral danger lies in the thought behind the motion and the conditions under which feeling is given expression. In determining the value of the dance and the consequent attitude of the church regarding it, it would be wise, as Washington Gladden points out, to consider a few general principles:

"Amusement is not an end, but the means to an end. When it begins to be the principal thing for which one lives, or when in pursuing it the mental powers are enfeebled and the bodily health impaired, it falls under just condemnation.

"Amusements which consume the hours which ought to be sacred to sleep are censurable.

"Amusements that call us away from work that we are bound to do are pernicious just to the extent to which they cause us to be neglectful or unfaithful.

"Amusements that arouse or stimulate morbid apprehensions or unlawful passions, or cause us to be restless or discontented are to be avoided.

"Any indulgence in amusement which has a tendency to weaken our respect for the great interests of life or to loosen our hold on the eternal verities of the spiritual realm is so far fraught with danger to us."

These principles apply to all kinds of amusements, and by them we can judge of the moral value of every form of play. The dance, instead of being the great evil it has been so often pictured, might easily be made an adjunct in the development of the truest and best type of life. This means that the love of the dance must be given a chance to express itself under better conditions than are now possible to the average individual. In such books as "From the Ballroom to Hell," and in a great deal of the preaching "against amusements" that fortunately was more common a few years ago than it is today, statements such as these were made: "Of the 500,000 lost women in our country, 370,000 went to hell through the dance." It is easy to see that such statements are not based upon definitely ascertained facts, and that they cast a heavy reproach upon the moral natures of young people. Undoubtedly, the dance has contributed its share to the destruction of thousands of young men and women, but it was the dance under the worst possible conditions. Christian judgment will demand that before tabooing the whole subject and relegating to outer darkness all young people who love to dance, we examine the motives, take stock of the kind of opportunities for dancing and then make an effort to meet whatever problem is raised by our study.

It is argued that when people begin to dance everything else has to take second place. This brings up another question. Dancing makes its strongest appeal at a certain stage in the life of a girl and boy. It is an attack, like measles, through which every youth has to pass. Older people dance and enjoy it; to them dancing is simply an incident, while many boys and girls in their teens make dancing the end of life. How are we to inculcate the principles that will bring about the proper balance? The common way has been to say "No, don't dance." The young people have gone ahead and danced just the same, and having danced against the wishes of the church, they have lost their interest in the church. "Dancing and piety very seldom go together" is a common saying, but it was piety that first sought a separation from the dance. When the more serious things of life come in and other interests intrude themselves, dancing, like all other forms of play, naturally falls into its proper place. The attitude for the church to take in regard to dancing is one of sympathetic interest; it should speak plainly and boldly concerning its dangers; point out how easily this innocent amusement may become evil; and proclaim the proper balance between work and play. The church ought not to condemn dancing as such, but it is well within its province to show that there are more than one or two ways for the people to play. When this has been done, instead of holding aloof, it is the duty of the church in every place to see that good laws are enacted regulating the dance and the dance halls; that the legislation is rigidly enforced, and that the public dance halls and other places of amusement are honestly inspected by order of the municipal government. This done, many of the abuses growing out of the dance will be eliminated. Then it remains for the church to help provide other and more wholesome forms of play which will appeal to all classes of the people.

Card playing is another form of popular amusement that has come definitely under the taboo of the church. The fascination that attaches itself to this form of play is as strong as civilization is wide, and the number and styles of games are so varied that a whole literature has grown up around the subject. All that we know of the beginning of cards is that they are of eastern origin. In the Chinese Empire and among the Hindus the pictures on the cards had a symbolic significance, and it is probable that among the latter they were in some way connected with religious worship. Cards were introduced into Europe late in the fourteenth century. From the records of the royal treasurer it appears that the first cards painted in France were invented to amuse the King, who had lost his reason and suffered from prolonged fits of melancholy. Early in the fifteenth century card making became an important industry and a regular trade in Germany. Cards lend themselves readily to gambling, and in 1420 the vice of gambling had so developed that St. Bernardin preached a sermon against the evil at Bologna. As a result of this sermon all his hearers gathered their cards together and burned them in the public square. Many attempts through the years have been made to put down card playing by the strong hand of the law, exercised at various times and for varying interests.

Card playing forms a simple means of amusing people. In discussing the moral values involved in cards, it is necessary to distinguish between the game played for amusement and the game played for money. In most of our states we now have strict laws against gambling, and in most places these laws are rather rigidly enforced. There can be no question as to the effect of card playing for money, and this means not only gambling in a public place, but playing for a prize of any kind. Just so long as cards are played for a prize, so long the practice will be positively evil. The size and value of the stake does not alter the principle. In the matter of card playing just for pleasure, if any one finds it diverting, if it does not detract from more important things, if it rests the mind after hours of serious toil, there can be no possible objection to it. To put such card playing in the same category with gambling is sheer nonsense. Let the church pronounce unqualifiedly against gambling, which is positively wrong, and at the same time educate the people to make choice between the things that are right and those that are wrong. But someone says that if you teach the people to play cards, unconsciously you create within them the desire to gamble, and so gamblers are made in the home. We are all familiar with the lurid story of the man who on his death bed charged his old, feeble, grey-haired mother with being the cause of his downfall, simply because she taught him to play casino when he was a boy. This has been told over and over again, with almost infinite variations, but with one purpose. Such an argument and such an attitude is as belittling to our conceptions of religion and the functions of the church as it is a travesty on humanity. If it were worth while to argue the question, we could match every such story by dozens of others of men who had not been allowed to play cards, but who, just as soon as they got away from home influence, learned the game, and, fascinated by the new freedom, went to the bad. Cards as a game have very little to do with the moral downfall in either instance. The church should so educate the taste that the individual will unerringly choose the best things, not the worst. Cardinal Gibbons, discussing this question, wisely remarked that in "indulging in amusement, much depends upon the way in which the persons themselves seek recreation. Diversion which is itself harmless may have such associations as to produce evil results. In considering the tendency of card playing for good or evil, three points should be noted: the surroundings of the player; the object of the game; and to what extent the player indulges in them."

The third most common form of popular amusement is the theater. The love of the drama is as much a part of human nature as that of dancing, and primarily it appeals to the same set of instincts. The presentation of a story by means of pantomime, or acting together with the spoken dialogue, is of very ancient origin. The ruins of theaters have been found in every ancient Greek city. Some of them are in good preservation today, and others have been partially restored. The Romans also had their theaters. In the middle ages the place of the theater was taken by the cathedral, and such dramatic performances as were given were in the nature of mysteries connected with religion and were performed in the cathedrals. When the revival of classical literature brought art and music and literature to the attention of the people, it also resurrected the theater, and really gave the impulse that produced the modern play and the theater as we know it. The art of dramatic representation has passed through many changes. In Greece the costumes and the acting were very formal and stereotyped, and consequently artificial to the last degree. Dramatic representation in which eloquence and "good acting," judged from our standpoint, played a part did not appear until about the time of the Restoration in England. From that time on the evident desire of the theater has been to be true to nature. The theater holds up to our view an ideal condition of affairs, but must as far as possible base its presentation upon scenes and customs that are contemporaneous with the events portrayed. In developing the modern drama the art of the actor has come to be recognized as giving him right to a place of honor and recognition. Women were not employed to take part in the theaters as actresses until the latter part of the 17th century. They were seen first in France. Before this the female parts were performed by youths. In the arguments for and against the theater we again see the effect of a lack of discrimination. The Puritans attacked the players, but in England they were not alone in their war on the stage. As early as the latter half of the 16th century the leading officials of the church were bitterly denouncing the stage and its evils. Oxford University in 1584 passed a statute forbidding plays and players in the university on the same grounds that the Puritans had taken the generation before. The play house was considered "a trap for young gentlemen and others." Players were put out of the city, and theaters were destroyed. In France Voltaire's soul was troubled when he saw the body of Adrienne Lecouvreur thrown into the ditch outside of the city. She was a popular actress who had been ministering to the joy of the people, yet who was not considered worthy of a Christian burial. In the ancient phraseology of our law books, the players were classified with the "rogues and other dissolute fellows."

For centuries we have recognized the evil side of the theater and its possibility of appealing to the lowest, and strenuous efforts have been made to reform it. The ideal theater has not been built, and ideal conditions do not obtain in the theatrical profession. Because of its tremendous power over people and its possible educative value, the church must take a more constructive attitude toward it than it has done for the most part in the past. Plays are good, bad and indifferent. There are theaters of all grades and all descriptions. If a good play is offered to the people at a reasonable price, it will become more popular and have a better patronage than the salacious or openly immoral production. The plays that have lasted and have become known to successive generations of playgoers are the plays that have a strong moral appeal, and are clean and amusing. Such plays as Rip Van Winkle played by Joseph

Jefferson, and The Old Homestead by Denman Thompson outlasted thousands of vulgar productions. The whole problem is one of discrimination. The motion picture shows have done more to redeem the theater than any other one thing, simply because they have presented the best in drama and literature in a pleasing form and at a price that is within reach of all the people. According to the best available statistics, there are about 17,000 places of exhibit of motion pictures in the United States, and fully ten million of the population of the nation visit these show places with more or less frequency. It is estimated that about one-sixth of the population of New York City attends the motion picure shows daily, and the people in other cities are attending in about the same proportion. During 1913 the National Board of Censorship of Motion Pictures estimated that the people of our country spent $319,000,000 for admission fees to the motion picture shows. These shows are popular because this is the first time in the history of the world that the best in art and literature presented in dramatic form has been made accessible to the common people.

Jane Addams calls the motion picture show "the house of dreams." Every theater is exactly this to a multitude of people. It is a good thing to have a belief in the unreal and to take an interest in a play world. Any person who cannot lose himself in watching and listening to the unfolding of an interesting drama has lost the last spark of the spirit of youth. Charles H. Parkhurst says: "Some of us have not in our lives enough of the unreal. Seriousness is likely to degenerate into moroseness and acidity if it is not diluted with an infusion of the play impulse. We need to play. Play lubricates the stiff grating machinery of work-a-day life. It keeps us young. When we have ceased to love to play we are almost dead already. To be indifferent to the fascination of amusements means that the child that was in us by nature has turned to adult and that we are already tainted with superannuation." Music is furnished through municipal parks; pictures, statuary and other works of art through the public museums; the libraries have furnished the means to satisfy those who have the taste for history, biography, fiction and poetry; but the man who appreciates the best in the drama and who longs to see a really good exhibit at the theater has been prohibited because of the price charged for admittance. On the other hand the cheap, poor, vile, contaminating theatrical performances have been within the reach of the poorest. It is the abuse of the theater rather than its use that makes it dangerous. Like every other interest in life the theater has a right to be judged at its best. Here, as in the other forms of popular amusements, it remains for the church to inculcate good principles, and so transform the tastes of the people that they will instinctively learn the things that are best and will naturally turn from those that are vile and hurtful to those that are pure and helpful.

The church, instead of being critical and suspicious of the people's motives, must be sympathetic with every endeavor to find right kinds of play, and ready to help provide those things that are good and make it possible for the people to follow their best inclinations. Granted that some of the people are suffering from an excess of amusements, and that they have gone too far in their desire for fun: the way to strike the proper balance is not by prohibiting all pleasures, nor by indiscriminate condemnation, but by giving such persons other things to think about and worthy tasks to do, so that recreation and amusement will naturally fall into their proper places in the ordered scheme of life. In preaching to some audiences against the excesses growing out of the expression of the play spirit, it is necessary for the church to urge moderation; but instead of demanding renunciation, put in its place the more significant word, discrimination.

VI

RECONSTRUCTING THE PLAY LIFE OF THE PEOPLE

CHAPTER VI

RECONSTRUCTING THE PLAY LIFE OF THE PEOPLE

Among the most important tasks that have been undertaken in recent years is the task of reconstructing the play life of the people. Various institutions and agencies are at work and gradually a new conscience is being developed, a new standard adopted and opportunities provided for play, so that to some degree it is coming to have its normal place in the community life.

The Russell-Sage Foundation, which was incorporated under the laws of the State of New York in April, 1907, has for its purpose "the improvement of social and living conditions in the United States of America." One of the first undertakings of the Foundation was to establish children's play grounds and to give temporary aid to the National Association then being organized to carry forward the play-ground work. As soon as the Playground Association of America had secured necessary funds to carry on its activities this department of the Foundation turned its energies to research, with a view to publicity and to a study of the special recreational problems not covered by the Playground Association.

The principles that guide this department as stated in its bulletins are:

"Research: To provide a sound basis for action it is necessary to make a thorough impartial searching out of the conditions underlying each proposed activity and to obtain a clear understanding of their mutual relations to other social tasks.

"Securing Community Action: This involves bringing the facts to the attention of those who are responsible for action; stimulating the adoption of various forms of social betterment relating to recreation and suggesting modes of procedure."

First among the agencies at work recon-

RUSSELL SAGE FOUNDATION BUILDING, NEW YORK CITY

structing the play life of the people is the Playground Association of America. This movement in our country grew out of the recognition that boys and girls need a place in which to play and some one to teach them how to play. The Association was formed to provide opportunities in every city that would be adequate for all classes of young people: sand piles for small children, play grounds with equipment for older children, and athletic fields with the base ball diamond and other equipment for boys. Added to these means were folk dance classes and halls provided for social dancing where boys and girls in their teens might have opportunity for wholesome social recreation. This Association furnishes experts to help cities organize their recreational life. The tendency in large cities and even in towns has been to fill up the children's play space with business blocks. Automobiles and policemen prevent street play, therefore many children, idle and playless much of the time, become wards of jails, charities and hospitals. It is expected that the cities themselves should bear the expense of creating and maintaining their own play grounds, but the National Association carries on the propaganda, educates communities, trains and furnishes leaders, thus helping communities to recognize that play ought to be as well organized as other educational activities. The ideal presented is that arrangements for play activities should parallel the school system in our various cities and towns. According to the last report of the Association over 1,050 communities replied to an inquiry as to whether they were conducting supervised recreation. Of these 642 cities reported that they were maintaining regularly supervised play grounds and recreation centers or were making some effort in that direction. These cities, during the year ending November 1st, 1913, maintained 2,302 such places. In 31 cities the playground and recreational centers are maintained by commissions; five by play ground or recreational departments. In others the work is combined with that of the park commission, school board, welfare boards, and still others are carried on by private agencies such as churches, women's clubs, improvement associations, Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations. In one hundred and eleven cities these centers were supported by municipal and private funds. The total expenditure reported for this purpose amounted to $570,223.81. There are 6,318 workers employed who are giving full time to directing the play. Besides these there are 1,933 care takers employed in and about the various play grounds. Fifty-nine cities maintain classes for the training of recreation workers and thirty-five of these cities reported 2,638 students. In addition, seven cities reported that training classes were in process of organization, and ten cities reported weekly conferences relating to the whole problem of the people's play, these conferences not being strictly training classes. In eighteen communities the recreation positions were filled by civil service examinations. During last year seventy additional cities added supervised playgrounds and equipment for the first time, and in twenty cities bond issues for recreational purposes were authorized to the amount of $2,358,000. In forty-five cities land and buildings were donated for playground purposes, having a combined value in twenty-six of these cities amounting to $196,400.64. In 313 cities a total average daily attendance was reported during July and August of 454,438 persons. The plans include separate space for boys and girls; supervised evening centers; streets used for play purposes and organized public athletics. Special play activities include the following: Wading, tramping, swimming, camping, story telling, dancing, skating, singing, civics, pageants, moving pictures, libraries and reading rooms, lectures, music, industrial training, gardening, folk dancing, evening entertainments, dramatics, debating and the activities of the Camp Fire girls and Boy Scouts. The report states that the past year marked an interesting growth in the establishment of playgrounds by industrial plants which maintained them for the entire community either wholly at their own expense or in conjunction with the other agencies for providing recreation. This Association has brought about a general recognition throughout our country of the fact that every community needs play centers that shall be open for the entire year, and that one of the first essentials in working out a creditable system in any city is to have men and women employed giving full time to the recreation problem under the direction of one person appointed by the city, who shall have general charge, as has a city school superintendent. In a report on the exploitation of pleasure in New York, published by the Russell-Sage Foundation, it was stated that a large majority of the young girls during the period of adolescence pass through the education of the dancing academy. This influence over the youth of New York is almost universal. There are over one hundred dance-halls in Manhattan. These range in character from the very finest and largest down to the dark back room of the saloon where "couples sit around at tables and from time to time arise and whirl to the music of an unpleasant piano." Mrs. Charles H. Israel secured information concerning dance halls throughout the United States. After studying one hundred and fifty different places, varying from the little town with its small hall, or the suburban village with its public place, to the city like greater New York with its five hundred licensed dance halls, and where a community of 80,000 persons has dance halls sufficient to accommodate 15,000 in a night, and where in five hundred dance halls a quarter of a million people dance each evening, she formed a conclusion with which we cannot but agree: "The interrelation of the amusement problem and the adolescent youth is something that there is need for us not to forget."

It is impossible for us to do away with dancing in the reconstruction of the play life of the people therefore it is absolutely necessary that the dance halls be closely supervised. Public opinion must be depended upon in every community to establish a standard of conduct. But it is often true that opinions are formed on too few facts and most judgments are small and narrow. Public opinion must be educated to view the needs and demands of the entire community and to recognize that any thing that happens of an objectionable nature in a dance hall might have happened any where else. At the same time the very fact that it did happen in the dance hall and is connected with it in the thought of the people must be looked upon as a register of the community's attitude. Joseph Lee says, speaking of this question of regulation: "Let us not be too fearful, or too negative. Life upon the whole is good, not bad. It was made for living not to be cast aside. The mutual attraction of boy and girl that has in it a great part of the interest and beauty of our lives is not a power to be decried or fought against." Educate the community to expect good things and people will look for the good. Show them that the dance-hall may conform to the highest conception of morality and right. Without this educating of the community conscience no legislation will be effective. But public opinion must be crystalized into law and the laws must be enforced. These laws, however, must take into consideration the varied character of communities and the different characteristics of human nature. To quote Joseph Lee again: "Human virtue it seems is like a hotel blanket; when you cover your feet it comes off your shoulders. When you feel that you are too décolleté for comfort and that the higher interests are being neglected you pull it up over your neck and it comes off your feet. Naturally human nature revolts against the cold. So the race has alternated between license and Puritanism. We must stretch our virtue until it will cover human nature as it is." The law which regulates the dance-halls in Chicago and New

York, while having many of the same features, must of necessity be different from the laws regulating the dance-halls in the small communities, where the people all know each other and life is lived on a simple plane. Control of the dance-halls and responsibility for conditions should be placed squarely upon the shoulders of one official in one department of the municipal government. This is a matter that has to do with the life of the city and the rules and regulations should be those that the community has sanctioned and is willing to have enforced. The very first consideration in such legislation should be the building in which the dance-hall is located. Our cities need to study the question of construction. We have laws on this matter but they are not uniform in the various cities, and some of them are antiquated and frightfully inadequate. The halls should either be located in fireproof buildings or not above the second story in buildings where there is danger of a conflagration. Rigid regulations should be enforced to provide adequate ventilation, and clean and sanitary toilet facilities that will not lead to coarseness, indecency, or the possibility of immorality. The lighting should be so arranged that there will be no dark corners, and the electric switches so placed that no one can tamper with them; the heating, the care as to cleanliness and the general appearance of the hall should all come under the inspection and regulation of the city.

Having a place to dance that is physically fit and clean, then certain regulations regarding the conduct of the dance itself should be enacted and enforced. An ordinance governing the dance should absolutely prohibit the selling of liquor in the hall or in any building directly connected with the hall. No return check should be issued. If a person leaves the dance-hall except under most extraordinary circumstances, he should not be allowed to return without again paying the regular admission fee. It is very difficult to enforce a rule against liquor, but just as long as the saloon and liquor interests control the dance-halls just so long it will be impossible to have any thing that even approximates a decent dance-hall. Liquor and dancing must be divorced, or certainly there will be grave moral danger. The worst excesses are reported in dance-halls after midnight. There is no reason why the dance-hall should be allowed to remain open all night, or even until three or four o'clock, except on rare occasions of unusual interest. A law should be passed in every community and rigidly enforced by which the dance-halls close at 12 o'clock. Julia Schoenfield thinks that this early closing is so important that even if a club desires to run a dance until the early morning hours, "It should show the license bureau the need for continuing the dance and receive a special permit." No girl or boy under eighteen years of age should be allowed to attend public dances in public dance-halls. It is argued that it would be very difficult to enforce this rule, and that in any case it ought not to be enforced, for the age from fourteen to eighteen is the age when a girl is very apt to need some such relaxation as the dance offers. The answer to this is perfectly obvious. Instead of public dance-halls for young people of this age provision should be made through the parks, playgrounds and other social centers where they can safely indulge their love of dancing and at the same time not break away from the family and neighborhood group. The Juvenile Protective Association of Chicago in a report on dancing suggests that a city ordinance should be enacted covering the following points:

"A license should be required for premises used for dance-halls, not for the man who operates the halls. This would make it impossible to have a license taken out by a relative after it had been once revoked.

"All dance-halls should be made to comply with the regulations of the Building and Fire Departments so as to insure proper sanitation and adequate fire protection. By this means many small and poorly built halls would be forced out of business because they could not pass inspection.

"The sale of liquor in dance-halls or in buildings connected with them should be prohibited.

"The giving of return checks to dancers should be prohibited so that the saloons in the neighborhood may not be constantly utilized.

"The connection of dance-halls with rooming houses or hotels should be prohibited.

"All halls should be brilliantly lighted and all stairways and other passages and all rooms connected with dance-halls should be kept open and well lighted.

"No immoral dancing or familiarity should be tolerated.

"People under the influence of liquor or known prostitutes should not be permitted in dance-halls.

"A policeman provided by the city should be on duty at every dance and should remain at his post from the time the hall is opened until it is closed. He should be instructed to enforce the above regulations.

"A license should be forfeited upon presentation of reliable evidence that the rules and regulations covering the dance-halls have been violated.

"There should be an inspector of dance-halls who should have in his department a corps of inspectors who would regularly inspect the dance-halls and make reports concerning them to the chief inspector."

This Association thinks that no limit should be put on the age of those who attend the dance and that the hours of closing should not be determined by statute, but left to the discretion of the people themselves. This would be well were it not that the people who attend the dance are not the ones who can determine these questions. Most of them are at the mercy of those who manage the halls. The only way that these regulations can be carried out is by having a strict inspection of the dance-halls. There should be an inspector in attendance in every hall where a public dance is given and in addition a matron, a woman of broad sympathies, wide tolerance and with a keen knowledge of the world, so that any girl would feel that she had in her a friend. The cost of the inspection should be borne by the management of the hall itself.

The Juvenile Protective Association of Chicago had an interesting experience with the proprietor of a disreputable hall. He was told that he must close his saloon, abandon his wine room and make certain changes in the physical arrangement of the hall and the buildings. These things he did. But several months later he came and said that he still felt that his hall was not what it ought to be; that liquor was sold at the dances under special permit. He asked the Association to send some one who would act as inspector and said he would gladly pay the salary of such an official. The Association sent a social worker to the hall who became friendly with the people and learned the personnel of the groups in the neighborhood. He has two good policemen who assist under his direction and they are also genuinely interested in the welfare of young people who attend the hall. The Association reports that the dances given in this hall have been completely revolutionized and the hall has become thoroughly respectable. The proprietor says of the experiment: "It pays to be respectable, for I am now renting my hall for more than I ever did before and I have no difficulty in disposing of it to nice people. And, besides, I sleep nights when I think of the girls." Fred F. McClure, of the Board of Public Welfare in Kansas City, says: "I am firmly of the belief that commercial dance halls properly regulated, if owned by individuals, can be brought to the same standard as halls owned by the municipality. Believing this we have tried to bring the commercial dance-halls of Kansas City up to the standard by placing inspectors in every hall every night and insisting that the manager enforce the rules laid down by the department." In Kansas City a permit for a license goes to the License Bureau and then to the chief of police for his counter signature. After the permit has been countersigned by the chief of police the manager of the hall signs it, thus he is practically entering into a contract with the city to operate the hall in a decent manner. Liquor is absolutely barred. No connection of any kind with the saloon is tolerated. There can be no passing in and out during the evening. No dance can be continued later than twelve o'clock except in the case of annual meetings. If a girl comes to the dance-hall who appears to be under seventeen years of age her name is taken down and the next morning is given to one of the women probation officers. She then visits the home of the girl and warns the parents of the dangers that threaten their daughter if she is allowed to attend places of commercial amusement and keep late hours. They are also warned that their girl must not attend a public dance again unless accompanied by a parent or guardian. Mr. McClure is doubtful of the ultimate success in making the public commercial dance-hall what it ought to be and agrees that the social center in a school-house would provide a much safer and better means of affording young people the opportunity for social dancing.

The municipal dance-hall has been proposed as a means of off-setting the evils so often connected with the public commercial dance-hall. Much can be said in its favor. In cities where municipal dance-halls have been opened those who are sympathetic with the people in their play have felt that the cities in opening these halls have moved in the right direction, while they do not fail to recognize the difficulty in maintaining such places. Probably, however, before the municipal dance-hall can take the place of the commercial hall it will be necessary to open up a larger number of our school houses and church parish houses as social centers, to have dance-halls in our parks and play-

Courtesy of O G. Lundberg,
Staff Photographer, Chicago Tribune

CHICAGO'S FIRST MUNICIPAL DANCE HALL, 1914

grounds or in connection with our churches and our clubs and invite the people to use them. The large public dance, wherever it is given, while it offers a wide variety of attractions will, because of the indiscriminate mingling and mixing of all classes of people, always be dangerous. Dances of small groups where every one knows every body else, where all are friends and neighbors, are more amenable in the very nature of the case to the ordinances of the city and to the dictates of good conduct.

Until recent days we in America have neglected a fruitful opportunity for utilizing our national resources of play in the failure to observe national holidays in a proper manner by the use of the traditions and history of cities and community life. Independence Day was celebrated until within a few years ago with noise and roar. Its joy was often turned to sorrow because of its fatalities. Seven years ago on the Fourth of July 5,623 individuals were seriously injured celebrating the day. This year there were very few accidents. The "Sane Fourth" means a celebration of the Fourth of July not by fire crackers and cannons but by some such means as that of pageantry. Programs are substituted for fireworks. These programs depict historic incidents and give emphasis to the patriotic ideals which govern our country. These celebrations are so attractive that year after year a larger number of our cities have taken up the idea. Not only does this kind of celebration appeal to the boy and girl who has rejoiced in the barbarities of the old time Fourth of July, but it makes a strong appeal to the foreign people to whom America is new, American history vague, and American customs unreal. By tableaux and pictures the whole historic past has been presented before the eyes of wondering groups and in a number of cities classes of aliens, as a result of this day's program, have sought the papers necessary to make them American citizens.

There need be no difficulty in finding

leaders in each community capable of training those who are to participate, arranging the details and conducting the pageantry on the Fourth of July. Programs and material in abundance are available for every community that wishes to undertake this splendid work of rescuing our greatest national holiday and making it contribute to the life and joy of our nation.

May Day offers another opportunity for the community to gather together its people, and through the play spirit bring them to an appreciation of the year and its blessings. The celebration of May Day is an old English custom dating from the period when life was more simple and when people took time for their pleasures. To bring it back and make it a part of the yearly round in the life of the average community is a thing well worth while.

All communities have some events connected with their early history that can easily be made the basis of a gala season. A pageant developed out of the stories of the past helps marvelously in cementing the good feelings of a community and teaches the people how to play and how to work together. At Sag Harbor "Home Coming Week" was made the occasion of depicting, by means of pageantry, the story of whaling days and the other historic events connected with the early times of this old Long Island village. As a result the entire population dropped their round of sober duty and "in a healthful and wholesome way sought enjoyment. There was added gain when in this enjoyment being purely social man rubbed shoulder with his fellows and thus became better acquainted with the people among whom he was living working and rearing his family." The entire community profited by it. People learned that they could "pull together." There are divisive forces enough. Loyalty to one's group, lodge or society very easily drifts into a sort of contempt for the other fellow's crowd, but when representatives of practically every organization in a community learn that they can work together in democratic harmony, on one plan, for several weeks, they are on the way toward learning that the same spirit of coöperation carried into every department of community life will help to solve many of the problems of our complex civilization. At Darien, a Connecticut town about forty miles from New York, a pageant was given depicting the story of the development of this quaint residential community. Other places have carried out the same idea and in every instance the results have been the same: the cementing of the neighborhood spirit, the development of a new ideal in the community and the growth of democracy. The season's church festivals all lend themselves to this type of pageantry and these are being utilized more and more by various communities. As a result the people are being furnished clean, healthful forms of play, are being amused and recreated; old bitternesses and divisions in the community are often forgotten and the newcomers, many of them from other shores, to whom American ways and institutions are enigmas, are being taught through this community play and brought into sympathy with the other races. The people of a neighborhood who join in play, forgetting racial and religious differences, are making a long stride forward in achieving that democracy without which our nation cannot endure.

The motion picture developed so rapidly that before we were aware of it a new form of entertainment had come into existence and made an appeal to all conditions of men, to all races, all ages and all degrees of education. It is by far the most democratic form of our play. The motion picture offers opportunity for great evil as well as great good, therefore it is most essential that there should be some check on the output of pictures and those that are of doubtful morality as well as those that are positively bad should be eliminated. What we see has a much more powerful effect upon us than what we hear. How can the motion picture be controlled? America does not like the

Courtesy of O. G. Lundberg,
Staff Photographer, Chicago Tribune

LINCOLN PARK REGATTA — CHICAGO

idea of a censor over the theater or over the printing press. A law broad enough in its scope to meet the demands of all the people would be futile. One narrow enough to satisfy another definite class, made up of those who see evil in every thing that they do not enjoy, could not be enforced. The solution of the question was effected by the organization of the National Board of Censorship of Motion Pictures. This Board was created by the People's Institute and at the request of the theaters in New York city that were exhibiting motion pictures. The Board is a volunteer committee, the members serving without compensation. It is made up of a general committee of representatives from twenty civic agencies located in New York, together with certain public-spirited individuals who are in no way connected with the theatrical or motion picture business; an executive committee is chosen from this membership and Censoring Committee of one hundred and five members. This Censoring Committee is divided into sub-committees and is at work at least five days each week. A majority of those voting determines the action of the Board on any picture. An appeal from the verdict of the Censoring Committee may be taken by any dissatisfied member of the Committee by the Secretary or by the owner of the film in question. The general committee has the power of final review. The film is again exhibited before the general committee; members of the committee of the first inspection state their reasons for or against; the owner of the film presents his defence of the film, and the general committee reaches the final verdict. As soon as final action is taken the owner of the film is notified in writing and a notification is sent through a weekly bulletin to correspondents of the Board.

Although this Censorship Board has no power in law, yet it does wield a great influence, because it works through a coöperative arrangement with the film makers, maintaining its relation with a given manufacturer only so long as he submits all his product and carries out all the recommendations of the Board.

The work of the Board is varied and exacting. A definite standard of judgment has been adopted and is stated in the following terms in its annual report:

"The Board prohibits obscenity in all forms; vulgarity when it offends or when it verges toward indecency, unless an adequate moral purpose is served. It prohibits the representation of crime in such detailed way as may teach the methods of committing crime, except as in the judgment of the Board the representation serves as a warning to the whole public; morbid scenes of crime where the only value of the scene is in its morbidity or criminal appeal are excised. Nevertheless the Board cannot judge films exclusively from the standpoint of children or delicate women, of the emotionally morbid, or of any one class of audience. But it does take into consideration as one of the controlling motives governing it the fact that possibly 25 per cent. of the total motion picture audience is made up of children under sixteen.

Broad problems such as the effect of scenes of violence on the juvenile mind still rest in an astonishing obscurity. It is impossible to get either from the lips of psychologists or from the penal statistics of the country any conclusive verdict on this subject.

The Board prohibits the unnecessary elaboration or prolongation of scenes of suffering, brutality, vulgarity, violence or crime; prohibits blasphemy, by which is understood the careless, wanton or unnecessary offence against religious susceptibilities of any large number of people in the country; anything obviously or wantonly libellous in films; anything calculated to cause injury to persons or interests from an obviously malicious or libelous motive, and films dealing with questions of fact which relate to criminal cases pending in the courts.

The Board does not enforce on motion

pictures simply its own views of what is desirable and right. Rather it tries to eliminate its own personal equation completely. The general conscience of the country believes in free speech on religious and political matters; in the right of the people to live and enjoy themselves in the way they see fit so long as fundamental morality is not injured; to insure a certain amount of freedom both to speech, to art and to conduct is a part of the conscience of the country as much as to forbid obscene and demoralizing speech and art and to prevent destructive actions.

The Board does not regard itself as a Censor of tastes, unless it is clear that the question of taste is an essentially moral one. Nor does it regard itself as a censor of accuracy unless the inaccuracy in question is of a libelous kind or will result in some concrete disaster to the person whom the inaccuracy misleads."

Several films were presented to the Board during the last year dealing with the White

Slave Traffic. These presented complicated moral problems. The Board finally stated its position as follows:

"The Board will critically examine all films presenting various forms of sex lapses; for those effects on audiences which arouse rather than minimize passions; which tend to perpetuate the double standard of morality; which reveal easy ways of gratifying desire and of making money in the 'trade,' or which simply indicate the weaknesses of humanity or recite the dreary tale of the lives of those unfortunate members of society called 'prostitutes.'"

Last year 7,576 reels of motion pictures were inspected by this Board. These represented 5,740 subjects and 8,698,246 feet of motion pictures. Out of these only 53 subjects were wholly condemned; 401 were condemned partially, so that cuts had to be made in the reels. In this way 12,030 feet of film were eliminated. This loss to the manufacturers amounted to $115,909.50. It is interesting to know that the film manufacturing companies coöperate heartily with the National Board and very seldom is there any question raised as to its decisions. The motion picture concerns of the country have found that decency pays.

When we begin to discuss the question of a censorship over the press and the theater we immediately find ourselves in the midst of difficulties. State censorship is being tried, but this plan of control meets with severe opposition, for it is similar in many respects to restricting free speech or imposing state criticism on newspapers, magazines and books. For the present, at least, the practical thing seems to be to give the National Board the widest possible influence and by coöperating secure the general adoption of its standards in every state and community.

The question of the municipal theater receives serious consideration from time to time. Considering the experience of some of the European cities there is hope that ultimately there may be a people's opera house in every community, where the best in music and the drama will be offered to the people at low prices. Why could not the average American community do in a smaller degree what Charlottenburg, Germany, did in a magnificent way? In this German city the people built a million dollar opera house and this is crowded every night with the residents of Greater Berlin. Here the finest singers and the best operas can be heard for sixteen or twenty cents. Let us hope that in some city in our country a group similar to the society which made this venture a success will try out this plan. Our efforts for a municipal theater have failed so far because not one of them has ever been purely a people's movement. They have usually had for their motive the exploiting of some new idea, the educating of the people's taste, or some other noble purpose, when in reality the people's theater must be built on the level of the people's lives and must give them a chance to hear and see the things they love best.

VII

A PROGRAM FOR THE CHURCH

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Any one will fail of his mark in discussing this question of recreation who assumes that the attitude of our churches and the conditions in those churches are the same as they were twenty-five years ago. While many will question some of the statements and divide on the issues raised in this book it is believed that the majority will agree in general with what has been said. The question that all will raise is this: what can the church do and how shall it be done? It must be plain that with a vision of the Kingdom of God in men's hearts, the next step is to realize that Kingdom in the midst of the community life.

The first thing for the church to do in providing for the people's play is to learn the recreational facilities of the community. This information cannot be gained without a thorough study of the situation. The average person in the community knows in a vague sort of way what the facts are relating to the social life of the people, but very few know the facts definitely enough to be able to state them accurately and convincingly. Each person is apt to think of each particular problem from his own standpoint. The court officials know of the girls and boys that have gotten into trouble because of evil forms of recreation. They can tell of men and women whose lives are blighted by the power of commercialized play, institutions which ought not to be tolerated in any well regulated community. The doctors, the school teachers, the ministers all have a partial view of the community needs. What is demanded is a study of the whole situation; a gathering of all the facts so that the entire community can view the question in all of its aspects. In making such a study it is better for one particular church to associate, if possible, with all the other churches and religious forces of the community in doing the work. If this cannot be done, any one church that has a vision ought to go ahead and get the facts. Such facts will include the number of people that are playing on the streets; the number of boys found in the pool-rooms; the attendance at the dance-halls, playgrounds, theaters and moving picture shows; the character of the places and the programs offered. If there are saloons in the community, it will be necessary to find out approximately how many people visit the saloons, their attractions and how long, on the average, the patrons remain; also the hours in the day or night when the saloons are doing the biggest business. Having secured this information the church will then have in its possession the rough material in the way of facts upon which to build its program of action.

After securing the facts, the results should be tabulated and compared. It will be easy then to determine whether or not the play facilities are adequate for the needs of the community. Rowland Haynes of the Playground and Recreation Association is authority for the statement that in many cities it was found by an intensive study that fifty to seventy per cent. of the entire recreational life was cared for in a haphazard way by home or private and commercial agencies and of the thirty to fifty per cent., which would naturally fall to the care of public recreation agencies, only five or ten per cent. was being handled by such agencies. From the facts gathered by the church it will be of prime importance to determine what proportion of the people have their recreational needs looked after by private and commercial agencies and what proportion through public agencies. The study, if it has been made properly, will include detailed statistics as to the places where the population is most congested. This information can be secured from the government census reports and the records of the city engineer's office. Having the area of each ward and the population it will be easy to compute the population per acre. Then if the school census can be secured it will give the number of children in each ward, section of the city, town or township. If these records cannot be secured it will be necessary to make a house to house canvass. Knowing how many people there are desiring to play and what their opportunities are for play it will not be very difficult to determine whether or not the facilities offered are adequate. By listing the various types of recreation in each section a judgment can be formed as to the physical and moral value of the kind of play facilities offered. For instance, if in a certain community it was found that there was a playground adequate in size and equipment to accommodate all the children within a radius of eight or ten blocks obviously there would be no need of agitating the playground question in that community. If in the same community there were three dance-halls, all of them of questionable character, and these were night after night crowded with the young men and women of the community it would be apparent that this love of dancing ought to be expressed under better conditions. If in the same community there were half a dozen saloons, two or three pool rooms, a penny arcade, three moving picture shows and a burlesque theater, it might well be assumed from the facts gathered that there was no very definite community program regarding recreation: that it was left to chance. It would probably be found that the play grounds had been put into the district by outside agencies. The facts being known, the one thing to impress itself would be the need of providing amusements for the older boys and girls as well as for the men and women; the problem of the children's play having been already met.

Having learned the facts through an intensive study of the community, and having tabulated the results and drawn conclusions regarding the needs and the facilities for meeting them, the wise church will attempt to change the character of the existing recreational agencies. There are definite ways in which pool rooms, dance-halls, moving picture shows and other play agencies can be regulated and made to conform to the law. In this the church will need to exercise the widest charity and a spirit of tolerance. People cannot all see alike, and every community must provide amusements that the people enjoy. In a city where a recreational survey was made and it was found that the halls were badly managed and were decidedly a dangerous factor in the life of the young people a committee called for a meeting of the leading citizens to discuss the question. Among others they invited the pastors of the churches. Two of the leading ministers refused to attend on the ground that they were unalterably opposed to dancing in any form and would not give their sanction to it, even so far as to attend a meeting where the question of recreation might be discussed. They were in favor of one thing only, and that was the elimination of the dance hall. These two ministers through their congregations represented approximately five hundred people out of a population of 90,000. In one of these dance-halls in question there was accommodated every week twelve times as many young people as attended the two churches together. As it was impossible for the churches to prevent the people attending the dance-halls the wise and humane thing would have been to help in regulating and making them as safe and decent as possible. If a community has no up-to-date ordinance governing public amusements this fact ought to be known. Let the church help publish it and then secure assistance in framing such legislation as will meet the needs. It must be clear that no matter what our personal opinions are regarding dancing there can be no question that the dance is much less dangerous conducted in a well regulated hall where there is close supervision by the city through volunteer or paid service than in one left to itself. What is true of the dance-hall is true of the pool room and other recreational opportunities. While we have to take things pretty largely as we find them, it is nevertheless the duty of the church to educate people to better standards so that the cheap and tawdry, to say nothing of the vicious, will no longer make its appeal, but until this is done the people who may become the victims of bad conditions must be protected against themselves, as well as against evil designs of evil men and women. Such regulations will not end with the institutions in the community that are known to be of doubtful or questionable morality. It is just as necessary to have some sort of public control and regulation over the public parks as it is over the public dance-halls. A trip through the parks in any city at night will offer convincing evidence of the need of plenty of light and police regulation. The emphasis ought to be put on the light for it is of more value in the long run than the efforts of the police, no matter how vigilant they may be. Thousands of young people in our parks, who take occasion to make love to each other, have no other place to entertain or to be entertained, and their "spooning" is as harmless as it is natural. The danger arises when a city becomes parsimonious in the matter of electricity and allows benches to be placed in dark and unfrequented places. Boston is a model in the administration and equipment of her parks. They are well lighted and on any warm evening you may see young couples making love on almost every bench, but the love making is in the glare and light of an adjacent electric globe.

It is a good thing to know the men who own the places of public amusement, and are responsible for their administration. A great deal may be done through personal contact. If the dance-hall proprietors, managers of pool rooms, owners of the motion picture shows and others who are furnishing public amusements know that the church people understand the needs of the community and know who is responsible for the kind of amusement that is being furnished they are very apt to feel that they are accountable to the community for their attitude as well as their actions. The Juvenile Protective Association of Chicago really did a remarkable thing in getting acquainted with the managers of some of the most vicious dance-halls, and in several instances, by explaining to them the purpose of the Association, secured the coöperation of these managers in helping carry out a program for bettering conditions. The National Board of Censorship of Motion Pictures has accomplished its wonderful work and exerts its widespread influence through coöperation with the motion picture men and the theater managers throughout the country. It has been able to do more than could be accomplished by any amount of the most drastic legislation. Most people want to do the best thing if they are only given half a chance. The church will not go far astray if it assumes this statement to be true and works along these lines.

The membership and the work of the Playground Association, the dramatic leagues and other agencies ministering to the play life of the people should be well known to the church. The church should learn from these recreational agencies what they need, and coöperate with them in helping to put through a unified program of play for the whole community. One of the great difficulties in this field arises from the fact that too often the agencies are working at cross purposes. In one city a sum of money had been appropriated from a bond issue for the purpose of establishing playgrounds. A committee of the women's clubs had one idea as to how the money ought to be spent; the civic federation had another plan; the feeble playground association had still another idea; the business interests of the city wanted it adjacent to the main business street so they could sell candies and sweets to the children on their way to the playground. The churches apparently knew nothing about the matter and expressed no interest to the committees. For seven years there was a dead-lock until finally one of the churches woke up and succeeded in bringing all the elements of the community together and out of the various organizations secured members for the playground association. A site was selected, equipment purchased, a director employed and the city had its playgrounds. It is much better for the church to work through existing agencies, coöperating with them, than it is to attempt to meet the needs of the community through its own efforts.

After coöperating to the fullest extent it probably will be found that there are certain definite recreational needs that are not being met by existing agencies. These the church should provide, or stimulate and create agencies to provide them. It may be that there is need for club rooms; it may be for a dance-hall; it may be for additional playground facilities. Whatever it is that the church undertakes to do in this way, it ought to be done to meet a definite need and as a protest to the community because the community has not been able, or willing, to do its duty. The failure of many a church plan for social service may be credited to the fact that the church has undertaken a piece of work not because there was a definite call for it in the community, but because the church felt that in its own interest it must do something different from what it had been doing.

The church is responsible in every community for educating the taste of the people and teaching them to desire better things. The pastor of a church in a western city saw that the young people were being hurt by the three commercial dance-halls that were located within a radius of two blocks of his church building. The saloon interests had such a grip upon these halls that it was impossible to better them by any kind of regulation. They were totally bad and would be bad as long as they existed. The pastor tried to get in touch with the management and found that the men interested were simply social pirates and he could make no impression upon them. In fact in his discussion with them they were insolent and defied him and his kind. After studying the situation, this pastor with the hearty support of his church board established a dance-hall in connection with the church. Admission was free but any one who attended had to be endorsed by some one that the pastor knew. The hall was a success from the very beginning. This was an unusual situation and the church was meeting it in an unusual way. Not only were the young people being given the chance to dance under clean, safe conditions, but the community was being educated and shamed into action against the bad halls. If the time should come when this community finds itself able and willing to build, equip and maintain a municipal hall it will then be time for the church to coöperate with the community by giving up its enterprise. Another church, hearing of what had been accomplished, undertook in its community to provide the same kind of dance privileges for the young people. A hall was procured and fitted up and the people were invited to come to the dance. Only a few responded. The church was divided over the question and finally abandoned all interest in recreation because their dance-hall was a failure. The pessimists in the church gloated over what seemed to them evidence to strengthen their theory that people are inherently bad. As a matter of fact this dance-hall was a failure simply because there was no need for it. A study of the community, a true appraisal of its needs, and a spirit of coöperation with the other agencies would have taught the church the futility of undertaking such an enterprise. There are many activities that are open to the church, many things that can be done and some of them with very little equipment. From among the following suggestions any wide-awake church will find some opportunity for service in its own community:

Equipping one or more rooms in the

church which shall be open to the various clubs in the community for club purposes.

Installing a pool table, a bowling alley and tables for other games.

Organizing a brass or string band to give free entertainments in the church itself or on the church steps or lawn on frequent occasions.

Assuming responsibility for the teaching of wholesome, helpful games that may be played in the home and outside of the home, but in close connection with it; providing hours and places of amusement where children and parents can play together.

Supplying volunteer helpers to the community's recreational agencies, such as the playground association.

Helping to organize and promote play in the streets. This kind of work can be successfully done by having one or more of the young men of the church get acquainted with the people in a congested neighborhood and in an informal way visit them some warm evening when they are sitting on the front porch or standing about on the street. In several places this has been successfully done. Without becoming officious, a visitor has simply suggested a game and in an off-handed sort of way started it and soon had all the people interested. In every instance the one who has organized the street play has been invited to return and in every case has become a great favorite with the people.

Providing tennis courts and baseball diamonds.

Arranging with the city authorities for side walks in certain blocks to be open for roller skating or coasting.

Promoting church athletics, baseball, basketball, volley ball leagues and offering a banner or a prize for the best athletic club.

Maintaining boating, yachting and fishing clubs in communities adjacent to navigable water.

Arranging for summer camps and camping trips.

Planning tramping trips under right guidance and direction for groups of dif-

Courtesy of O. G. Lundberg
Staff Photographer, Chicago Tribune

PRAIRIE WALKING CLUB ON A HIKE, CHICAGO, ILL.

ferent ages in the church. One church that has made a success of this kind of work arranges a tramping trip to some place for every Saturday afternoon during the year. The names of the members of this tramping club are printed in a pamphlet and the program of the tramping trips laid out at the beginning of the season. A diary of the club is kept by one of the members; pictures are taken of the various trips and during the winter time many a pleasant and happy evening is spent living over again the incidents of the past summer.

Securing a lease upon vacant lots in the community and providing the means and direction to the young people for gardening.

Providing an adequate program for the celebration of the various holidays by pageants, entertainments, picnics and such other exercises as appeal to the good judgment of the church.

Coöperating in promoting the Boy Scout activities, paying special attention to the social fraternal features of the work and eliminating everything from the movement that tends to foster a love of militarism.

Organizing and maintaining Camp Fire groups for girls.

Helping to provide some form of recreation for the community on Sunday afternoons. This is one of the greatest opportunities offered to the church today. All forms of commercial recreation ought to be closed on Sunday. Ball games where admission price is paid should not be tolerated. In congested districts where large numbers of children would have to spend most of the day in idleness on the streets if it were not for the playground, there can be no reasonable objection to the playgrounds being opened and other play facilities offered. When strict Sabbath laws are enforced thousands of people wander up and down the streets with nothing to do and usually fall in with suggestions of evil. In an eastern city the old blue laws were enforced very strictly. Ten miles distant was a suburban town that was not so exacting. The moving picture shows and two dance-halls were running all Sunday afternoon and late into the night. From twelve noon until nine o'clock at night in the summer time it was almost impossible to get a seat on the trains running out of this city, and from nine o'clock until midnight it was impossible to get a seat on the trains coming in from the suburban town. The people in this city were not doing their duty. Their attitude was wholly negative. If they were convinced that the door of the ordinary recreational opportunities should be closed on Sunday afternoon, they owed it to the people of the community to provide some way in which they could spend their time in clean, healthful, safe enjoyment of the day. In Houston, Texas, a definite effort was made to meet such a situation. The largest hall in the city was opened to the people and free entertainments and music furnished. This plan has been tried in other places, and everywhere it has been tried it has proved successful. Parks and playgrounds as they have been opened to the people on Sunday have been utilized and always to the good of the community. There are a variety of ways to meet the needs for Sunday recreation. Whatever is done must be done with a thorough knowledge of all the facts and with a view to the sentiment as well as the needs of the community. Let a church do any or all of the following:

Urge, work for and demand in the name of humanity the Saturday half holiday for all the people.

Organize a group of the base ball enthusiasts in the church and together rent one of the large boxes at the league base ball park. Let this be known as the box belonging to the local church. Other organizations follow this plan and their members always sit together at the games. Why not the church?

Offer the church building and its facilities to the community as a place for informing the community as to its recreational needs and emphasize these needs through public addresses, entertainments and pictures.

Install a stereopticon and moving picture machine if possible and utilize this popular form of amusement.

Organize a dramatic league in the church, teach the principles underlying the best in the drama, and in arranging to give frequent exhibitions during the year, give all of the people in the church the opportunity of taking part in the various plays that are presented. The Missionary Education Movement of the United States and Canada publish high grade plays and missionary pageants that may be used in the churches to good advantage.

Equip a gymnasium in connection with the church. Provide classes and instruction either in the church or through the church agencies in coöperation with the Y.M.C.A. and other local institutions.

Finally, the most important thing of all is for the church to come to an intelligent understanding with the community as to its own attitude and sympathies. No community can succeed in meeting the recreational demands of the people unless there be some clearly thought out and definitely accepted program for play which will meet the requirements of all the people as it does the demands of the whole individual. The church will be of the greatest value in helping to formulate the standard, create a program and make it effective. This will mean a hearty appreciation of the whole community and its needs; sympathy for its failings and a willingness to help create a better understanding of the various elements making up our complex democracy.

The responsibility of the church does not stop with its community. We must learn to think in terms of the community, then educate the community to think in terms of the state, and the state in terms of the nation. Outside of their own specialized field the churches in every community ought to feel that they are a part of the national movements which are reconstructing the play life of the people, helping them to secure more of the joy of living which is the birthright of every individual.

VIII

RESULTS ATTAINED AND ATTAINABLE

CHAPTER VIII

RESULTS ATTAINED AND ATTAINABLE

It is well known that John Wesley was a lover of all kinds of literature and especially of the drama. He read the Greek and English dramatists and advised his preachers to study them both for the help and for the pleasure to be derived from them. He never attended the theater but he clearly stated his attitude toward the question of popular amusements. After declaring that he did not attend the theater or play cards he says: "Possibly others can. I am not obliged to pass any sentence on those who are otherwise minded. I leave them to their own Master. To Him let them stand or fall." The churches generally are coming to accept this as a proper attitude. But it is not enough. The church must help to form the standard of tastes. Its attitude must be positive, not uncertain nor negative. It is encouraging to note that in hundreds of communities churches are expressing positive interest in unmistakable ways. Social centers, playgrounds, and other public institutions for providing means of play are being heartily supported by the churches.

The interest of the church in play is not however limited to its interest in these public movements. More and more it is establishing and making effective institutional plans for meeting the play problems of the community. In discussing the results that are being achieved by the church it is right to include the work of those agencies that are directly connected with or under the direction of the church, such as the Young Men's Christian Association, the Young Women's Christian Association and church social settlements.

An inquiry was sent out recently to a large number of cities throughout the country regarding the play facilities of the people and the activities of the church in relation thereto. The reports received indicate that the opportunities provided are totally inadequate to the need. In the largest number of cases the Young Men's Christian Association church clubs and public playgrounds furnish the chief means for play. The schools are being used more and more for recreational purposes, many of the newer buildings being equipped with gymnasium and game rooms.

The answer from one city is typical of conditions found in the best of them, although it has gone further in shaping a program than have many of the others. The school authorities and park department of this city provide ample playgrounds and swimming pools for use during the summer, with gymnasium classes in the winter. The schools have baseball, basketball and community clubs. These facilities are all supported by the city. The playgrounds are equipped with the usual apparatus and are closely supervised so that the language and conduct of the children are always under observation. The play is graded, there being games provided for different ages and for both boys and girls. Among the schools there has been developed an athletic league and an annual field day is held at which the teams from the various schools compete with each other. The Young Men's Christian Association and the churches furnish most of the directors who are employed by the city. The Boy's Club is strong and has recently built a new club house thoroughly equipped for play and instructions and has an efficient corps of workers under the direction of a competent superintendent who is paid by the city and is also one of the probation officers of the local juvenile court. These recreational opportunities are thoroughly appreciated by the people. The playgrounds and the buildings used as a social center are crowded. Opinions differ but the tendency is toward a more democratic control of play and the widest use of the facilities offered. The churches in the city, with the exception of two are composed of the well-to-do class of people. The members of the poorer churches, one of which is supported by a well-to-do up-town church, use the play facilities that are offered by the city, while the other churches report that their members are not so much dependent upon these places, many of them finding their amusement at the theaters and at dances given by their various sets, the country club, a boat club or through other means provided by private and commercial enterprises. The pastor of one of the leading churches in this city thinks that social lines are drawn as closely in the matter of play as in any other matter pertaining to the social life of the people.

The playgrounds in this city have been productive of the utmost good. "They have helped to reduce hoodlumism and consequently petty crime and misdemeanors are not so frequent as formerly." The churches have had an important part in helping to provide these excellent play facilities. The federation of men's clubs set on foot the movement looking to the larger use of the school buildings as social centers. When the plan was under way the whole management was turned over to the school authorities, yet even today the clubs back up the plan by their influence and the officers charged with the active work of promoting these centers are all vitally interested in church work. Outside of this general activity in promoting play and making it possible, the churches have maintained a social service league, various clubs, and organizations for the boys and girls, have provided outings, and arranged group and neighborhood meetings. No effort has been made to censor the theaters or to deal with the problem of the dance.

There is a difference of opinion among the church people as to the value of this kind of work. Some of the churches have unwisely looked upon every play facility offered to the people as a means of

CARDING CONTEST

Arranged in connection with the White Rock Fair, North Carolina, under the auspices of the Presbyterian Board of Missions

increasing the attendance at the Sunday-school and church services, and have measured the success of every undertaking in terms of the increased enrollment in the church and Sunday-school. A few of the ministers believe in furnishing a variety of interests for the young people but deeply deprecate any thing which does not show evidence of a positive good.

In relation to Sunday amusements one community reports: "The church going people are opposed to anything that would very materially change the nature of the day from the old fashioned Puritan Sabbath." It was reported that in one of these cities the religious people were utterly indifferent to this matter; in another that the people were apathetic or lacking in sympathy. It is very difficult to secure accurate figures as to the number of people in the various cities who attend the Sunday dances. The churches recognize that there is a large problem raised by the question of Sunday amusements, but as yet in no city have they been able to meet this problem adequately and solve it without raising so much discussion and opposition that it has seemed wise not to attempt even those things that might be of help.

The report from still another city is significant as it represents quite a different situation. This city has a population of about 22,000. It is a manufacturing town of diversified interests and the people are of mixed races. It is well located and has every opportunity for growth in commercial and social importance but for a long period of years there has been no growth in population. Wages are good; working conditions are favorable for the most part, and there have been no labor troubles; the school houses of the town are well built and its churches, of which there are the average number found in places of this size, are attractive and well attended. In the matter of play facilities there is one theater which caters to all classes, presenting serious drama, English grand opera, comic opera, vaudeville, minstrels and motion picture shows. On Sunday this theater presents a vaudeville show, although this is contrary to the state law. There are seven motion picture shows, the best of which is very good and the worst cannot be called bad. They are all maintained in a decent, orderly way. All of these shows are open on Sunday. Nearby there is a famous watering place which attracts thousands in the summer months. This resort is easily accessible by ferry. There is a splendid beach here. Formerly a great deal of liquor was sold at the place but it has improved in this respect in late years. The management is not vicious but is simply looking after the dollars. The best people in the town patronize the resort. There is no cheap vaudeville, no open immorality. The worst feature grows out of the abuse of the wide reaches of beach adjacent to the resort, and of the woods which extend down to the very edge of the water and which are neither lighted nor patrolled at night. The management of this resort was appealed to and has coöperated very heartily with the authorities of the city in helping get rid of gambling and dancing and in giving better protection to the girls and women, especially to its own employees. It is significant that the moral tone has been rising during the last half dozen years. During the summer season train loads of excursionists come from distant points and bring thousands of merry-makers to spend Sunday at the lake. The bay around which the city is built affords unusual boating facilities and is largely used. Skating and ice boating are enjoyed during the winter months. The city is fortunately laid out in a triangular arrangement with abundant recreation parks for tennis, football, baseball and other sports which are open and free to the public. An attempt to secure a public playground failed. There is no Young Men's Christian Association or Young Women's Christian Association. The Business Girl's Christian Association, however, provides gymnasium classes in connection with other features in the church basement which they rent and where they hold weekly meetings. A kindergarten is maintained in connection with a local Episcopal church. The new high school building is equipped with a gymnasium. No investigation has been made of the dance-halls of the city. The latest dances are taught and it is claimed by some persons that they are danced in a modest manner. There is no unanimous verdict on this question however, for when asked regarding a dance that was conducted by a group of decent fellows one girl said: "I would not like to be caught dead on the floor of that hall." In fact no one in the city seems to have any accurate information as to the actual conditions. The saloons do a good business. The enforcement of the new state law which limits the number of saloons to one to each five hundred of the population put fifty-five of the saloons out of business. Sunday closing is now observed for the first time in a number of years. There are two large breweries in the town and five wineries. There are plenty of pool-rooms and bowling-alleys frequently connected with the cheaper grade of saloons. The number of pool-rooms have increased since some of the saloons were closed. The roller skating rink has a good patronage. There is a club in the town, with a well appointed but modest club-house, having a membership of about two hundred of the leading men of the city. Cards, billiards and pool are the principal games. There is a reading room, dining-room and guest-rooms. No liquor is sold, but members are allowed to keep liquor in their lockers. No games are allowed on Sunday. This club opens its doors for women's card parties and receptions. These functions are patronized by the families of the members and their friends. Secret orders are strong and nearly all of them maintain club rooms. All of the play facilities of the city are maintained by private enterprise except the public parks in which band concerts are occasionally held. A large proportion of the people avail themselves of the opportunities offered by the various places of amusements. Church people patronize all of these places, though there are a few exceptions. The outdoor features of the amusements offered are undoubtedly good; the only question to be raised is in regard to Sunday observance. The indoor features shade all the way from good to very bad. The two largest Catholic parishes have audience rooms in their parish buildings and here amateur theatricals are given by the young people. One of the Protestant churches has a small gymnasium and conducts classes. During the winter a lyceum course has been managed under church auspices. Occasional game days are provided for the children of younger age. The boys are cared for by the churches through such organizations as the Knights of St. Paul and by the Boy Scout movement. Various coöperative organizations have attempted to institute a Young Men's Christian Association but so far without success. Inter-church relations exist on a small scale.

If the churches had been asked some of them would have helped in the movement made for the establishment of playgrounds, for all the churches, excepting one or two, are heartily in sympathy with this kind of outdoor recreation. The playground movement, which proved abortive, shows that a new conscience is being developed and that recreation is coming to be considered as a real community interest. If the old settlers had not argued so strenuously against the playground on the basis that the natural advantages offered by the bay and its adequate beaches made the establishment of a playground foolish, the organization would have been completed and the playground secured. A movement toward the establishment of free public bathing beaches has so far proved a failure probably on account of the influence of the Resort Company. There is no united position on the question of play maintained by the ministers. Apparently the churches have not been able to come to any conclusion as to what constitutes right and wrong in the matter of the people's play. "The ideas range all the way from the decent continental Catholic type to the strictest Puritan type." There is no common ground. The idea of a community of interest in this matter has evidently never made its appeal. "There are at least three communities. The minds of the mass of the people are liberal to a fault, while the influential church members are tinctured with liberalism but on the whole follow the rather narrow Puritan ideal. A small minority in the churches have a well balanced, well thought out attitude toward this important question."

The Young Men's Christian Association has met the play problem in a straightforward way and the results it has achieved ought to be a guide to the churches in planning for future developments. The first games tried in the association buildings were of a simple kind, and yet these caused more or less criticism. It took some time before the bowling alley would be tolerated. Then followed table croquet and finally some of the more progressive associations installed pool and billiard tables. The protest against these gradually lessened until today it is not an exaggeration to say that most of the well equipped associations have these splendid games, and the interesting thing is that, so far as we can learn, no association has ever found the pool table anything but a help and no association has ever taken it out after once installing it. The testimony of practically all of these organizations is the same as that expressed by the following reports:

"We installed pool and billiard tables in our building about four years ago. There was some opposition at the time and there are still some church members in the city who do not agree with our policy, but our experience has so fully justified their installation that we would consider our equipment very incomplete without them. All young men like to play games, and pool and billiards are practically the only games of an indoor character that appeal to red-blooded young men. This whole question of pool and billiard tables is largely a matter of supervision and we have always had a university student for an attendant. In selecting men for this job we look for more than the ordinary pool table attendant. We are just as careful in selecting him as we are when we secure a man for any secretarial position. Keeping the right man in the pool room has solved the question of discipline and evil influences. The very presence of this man gives the room a tone which does not admit of any other atmosphere than the best."

"Personally I was very much prejudiced against the use of these games by the Young Men's Christian Associations but my experience has entirely removed this prejudice and we are able to draw into the building a group of men who otherwise would take no interest in the activities. The only argument I have ever heard against the game is that it will teach young men to play who will then visit other pool and billiard rooms where the standards are low. Neither my experience nor my observation have led me to note any such case as this."

"We have conducted a pool and billiard room in our present building for the past eight years. Before the tables were put in we called a meeting of all the Protestant ministers in our section of the city and discussed the matter very frankly with them and then asked their opinion as to whether or not they thought it wise for us to open such a room. Every minister but one voted in favor of our putting them in. The tables have had a very general usage ever since they were put in. We have no smoking in the room and the social tone is splendid. We were quite surprised when the billiard room was opened to find that it was not *necessary to teach any of the boys to play pool and billiards.* They had all been playing in public pool rooms and were pretty well versed in the matter. We find that the room provides a splendid social feature and that many of our members who formerly played in the pool rooms connected with the saloons now play here."

"We have pool and billiard tables in our building. There was some opposition when we put them in but we have none at the present time. They are generally used and it is keeping a large number of our boys in the building by having them. I believe it has made some difference in the lives of the young men in our community, especially the boys coming out of high school, by playing here. It keeps them away from the cheaper pool and billiard halls."

"We have four pool tables and two billiard tables. They were put into our Association about four years ago. There was some opposition on the part of a few but this has been practically overcome. The tables are not in my opinion absolutely essential to the life of the young men in the association but they add much to it. Their use is quite general during the noon and evening hours when men are free from their work. It has made some difference in the social life of the association but of course this small effect in a large city like this would not have any great marked influence on the life of the community. The sum total of opinion with us is that they are a good thing when carefully supervised and helpful rather than detrimental to the moral life of young men."

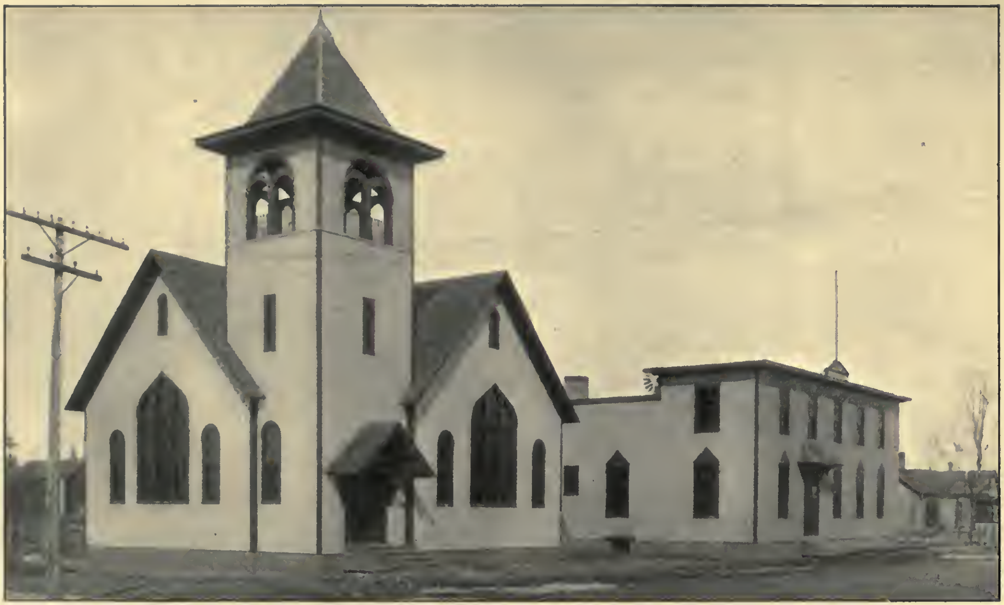
"We have eight branches in all in which we have billiard tables. In the four boys' branches we have a special rule that only boys eighteen years of age and up shall use the billiard tables. Other games are provided for younger boys. In all but one of these branches the billiard tables are in very great demand, and the exception is caused by the room being too small so that there are too few tables and they are too crowded. There has been no serious opposition after the clergymen and some others who were doubtful have seen the billiard rooms in operation. When our associations organized and built gymnasiums a generation ago we were ardently discouraged in the attempt because a great many good men said that gymnasiums were in the hands of prize-fighting gangs and no good could come but only evil to us through attempting to conduct a gymnasium. We took the gymnasium, lifted it out of its bad environment, sanitated it and made it a source of moral and religious influence. We are doing the same thing with billiards—a game in which there is no intrinsic evil, a clean game and a beautiful game. It is played in our buildings entirely free from gambling, profanity and tobacco. Billiard rooms like gymnasiums must be supervised. There is hardly anything more fruitless or deadly in a community than a gymnasium or billiard room without expert supervision. This costs money. Churches, clubs and associations too often force themselves to learn the bitter lesson that the putting in of equipment does not solve but may complicate the problem. Personality is as important as facilities and facilities are positively dangerous without leadership."

"We have numerous pool and billiard tables in our men's and boys' departments. There was practically no opposition to their installation. So far as I know there is no criticism against their use. The tables are extensively used."

"As near as I can remember we put in our first pool table in our building about ten years ago and at that time there was a little opposition from some quarters, but I believe the day of objection to those things, especially in a large city, has passed away. We consider both the billiard room and the bowling alleys a necessary part of an up-to-date equipment in a building of this size. We have constant supervision of our outfit and endeavor to keep our equipment in the finest possible condition. The rates we charge are about half what they are in a regular pool room. Our room is filled most every day at certain times but we are not making much from it financially. Of course it is a great social factor and we find that lots of these things must be conducted even though there is not much money in them."

Of course no one supposes that because the Young Men's Christian Association has put in pool tables that of necessity they are solving the community's recreational problems. They are however making an advance and the spirit that leads them to take this step promises greater things and a more aggressive interest in the community welfare in days to come.

In Brooklyn the Men's League in one of the largest churches coöperates loyally with the local park and play-ground association, and last summer helped in a movement for more adequate recreation piers. In one of the largest cities of the middle west a strong church has helped maintain play-grounds in the city. In fact this church furnished the first inspiration for this undertaking and since its inception has furnished most of the money to carry it on. These things indicate a vital interest. A good start has been made. In the country communities especially, the churches are coming to the conclusion that they cannot possibly solve the rural life problem without an adequate provision for social and recreational opportunities. A well rounded life is just as possible in the open country as in the centers of population, provided the social, educational and religious advantages be equal in the two places. A little church at a cross roads right out in the midst of the open country has been working for a number of years to meet the needs of the community. It has laid out an athletic field with baseball diamonds, basket ball courts, tennis courts, swings, sand piles and other playground equipment for the younger children. During the winter home-talent entertainments are encouraged and supported enthusiastically. The agricultural college has been asked to coöperate with the church and has sent out their lecturers to assist on the lecture and music course that is provided under the auspices of the church. An annual home-coming week has been made a special feature of the year's work.



CHURCH AND SOCIAL CENTER IN WIBAUX, MINN.

Through the efforts of this church Saturday afternoon has come to be recognized as a time for play and it is a general holiday on all the farms and in all the homes. At this time the community meets in contests of baseball, basketball and tennis and the local teams compete with the teams of surrounding communities. The church has assumed the leadership of all the recreational life of the community but it also coöperates with any clean, healthful recreation that may be offered from any other source. The results have well paid for the effort and now this church is looked upon as the natural center of the community life.

In Chicago, Boston and several other cities the Sunday-school associations have organized and successfully managed inter-church baseball leagues.

In a community of another sort a church has taken hold of a bad group of amusement opportunities and by putting in better things has been able to transform the attitude of the people and have a large influence over the life of the small city. The first thing that this church did was to secure the coöperation of several of the other churches and form an inter-church athletic association which immediately took over the baseball games and since that time they have been played under the control of the church people. A ball field was rented and all the expenses paid by the churches. The gate receipts nearly paid the bills. The result is that they have clean baseball without drunkenness or profanity on the grounds. This church is now planning to finish off its basement and provide a game room, a bowling alley and a gymnasium. As this town is the center of a large farming community and many of the country people come to town on Saturday the church has arranged to put in a rest and reading room in its building that may be used by the country people with the privilege of making coffee on the church kitchen range.

Success in doing this work is measured by the success of the local church and it is here we find the need of leadership. The leader must be wise as well as efficient; must know how to direct, how to coöperate and sometimes how to follow. Failure is often due to the fact that the church people forget that there are many and varied interests and personalities in every community. The true aim ought to be to strengthen everything constructive that is being done and to compete with nothing except that which is distinctly bad. This kind of effort will be successful if it is kept simple and natural and respectful of the popular ways and traditions.

IX

THE CHURCH A SOCIAL CENTER

CHAPTER IX

THE CHURCH A SOCIAL CENTER

A REAL community is a body of people having certain things in common; who are dependent upon each other for their means of livelihood; whose interests are related; who look at passing events from the same general standpoint, and who recognize their dependence one upon another for good or evil. The full idea of a community can be developed only as there is some meeting place where through fellowship, study, play and worship each sharer in the community life learns to know the value of the interests that exist in common. Under ordinary circumstances people living in the same block or neighborhood come to know each other lodges, our work, our play, being diverse and to feel an interest and a relation in each other's affairs, but it is too often true that in our cities and rural districts the things that ought to bring us together divide us. Our religion, our clubs, our societies, our in character, tend to separation. In making the changes, therefore, which are necessary it is especially important that there should be some central rallying place, where all the people could occasionally meet and bring forward their interests and their problems for consideration. Jane Addams says it is a good thing for us to get out occasionally on the highway of life to see each other's burdens even if we do not help to bear them. President Wilson once told a story of a woman who, though very fastidious, was of genial good nature, whose automobile happened to be stalled one night in front of a school house where a community meeting was going on, over which her seamstress was presiding. She was induced by some acquaintance whom she saw going into the building to go in also, and was at first filled with disdain. She did not like the looks of some of the people; there were too many of the sort with whom she did not care to associate; an employee of her own was presiding, but she was obliged to remain a little while, as it was the most comfortable place to stay while her automobile was being repaired. Before she could get away she had been touched with the generous contagion of the place. Here were people of all sorts, talking on subjects that were interesting and that revealed to her things of which she had never dreamed in regard to her common vital interests with persons she had always thought unlike herself. So the communal bond of human hearts was revealed to her, and she realized the unity of human life.

It is generally wise to utilize the public school building for the social center of the community, but in many places this is impossible. The church is then offered a splendid opportunity for this kind of service, especially in rural districts.

A little village in eastern Vermont has a population of about four hundred persons and about one hundred and seven families.

It is primarily a farming community, three-fifths of the people being thus employed. There are, however, mills in the town which employ about one hundred men and women. The farming people are mostly of American stock; the mill people are mostly French. There were three churches in the community, two Protestant and one Catholic. One of the Protestant churches was so weak that finally it gave up and the other church purchased its property. Under this arrangement it would seem that there was a fair chance for good substantial work, but the people in the community had apparently lost interest in and respect for the church as an institution. There were less than forty resident members of which number not more than one-half could be depended upon. The only organization in the church having any life was the Ladies' Aid Society. The Sunday-school struggled along with fifteen or twenty children; the community was torn with petty bickerings and old jealousies. Every newcomer to town was warned of the sore spots. Families living next door to each other were at deadly enmity; the children quarreled and fought, and the parents would not speak to one another. The church had been seeking a pastor for months but without success, until finally a man who had been preaching in a nearby town in a much stronger church thought he saw an opportunity and accepted this field of labor. He found it a good place for hard work but with very little for encouragement. It seemed impossible to get any coöperation in anything that he attempted. The church had dwelt upon its own needs so long that it had become thoroughly self-centered. It was not interested in the community except in so far as the community could minister to its success as an institution. The pastor's one ambition was to make this church a social center. Having studied the situation, the first attempt he made was to organize the boys. A branch of the Young Men's Christian Association was formed. It was found, however, that some of the boys were not "evangelical" and consequently the Young Men's Christian Association excluded them. To obviate this difficulty, the institution was recognized as a boys' branch, and young men between nineteen and twenty-seven good naturedly took cards and had just as good a time as if they were members of the regular Young Men's Christian Association. This church used its own building for worship and remodeled that of the other congregation for use as a parish house. The Young Men's Christian Association met there. The first winter season proved a good one and closed with thirty-seven members. The boys made their own rules regulating their conduct. There were only three: "No swearing, no smoking and no 'rough house,' " and only once was any rule broken. Except for pictures, an occasional dance of questionable character and a pool room, the only play opportunity offered to the village was through this newly formed association. To meet the need further a plan was made to secure at least one good entertainment each month. Dramatic readings, stereopticon lectures and other enjoyable and helpful entertainments were offered to the public. In these affairs local talent was supplemented by outside assistance in the way of speakers, lecturers and singers as far as they could be secured. During the first winter there was also a series of socials held, at which the young people became acquainted with each other. On Easter Sunday a special service brought out a large attendance, and a good concert by an enlarged chorus gave the pastor his first chance to address the community. The sermon dealt with the community's needs, what a church ought to do in regard to them, and what the local church was planning. The coöperation of the people was asked. Just about this time the State Sunday-school Association conducted a canvass of the town with the help of the church workers and brought the pastor a wealth of information on its cards. In June a children's service was held and again the community attended church. This time an object lesson was used to reach the hearers. The subject was the sower and the soil. Four boxes of soil were used: A box of good soil with growing vegetables created great interest, and the illustration was applied to the needs of growing boys and girls. Before long a manual training school was organized and taught by the pastor under the supervision of the town school board. Tools and benches furnished by the school board were installed in the parish house. Work done was credited to each pupil on his regular school grade work for the spring term. The exhibit of furniture made by the boys won the second prize at the State Fair, and the boys used the money to purchase standard pictures for the public school rooms.

There was much discussion regarding a good celebration of the Fourth of July and the Young Men's Christian Association suggested that it be allowed to secure funds for fireworks. Sufficient money was raised and a program of games and sports in the afternoon, with fireworks in the evening, was carried out. Free ice cream and orangeade were furnished. A series of summer evening concerts was next planned. It was found that a good orchestra of four pieces could be secured from a nearby city at ten dollars a night if the local community would furnish transportation. Five automobile owners in the village were appointed a committee on transportation, and each evening of the five concerts one of these men sent his car to the large town twelve miles distant, bringing the members of the orchestra and returning them after the festival. Games were provided for the young people, and ice cream and cake served at a small charge. The sale of these refreshments covered the necessary expenses. A committee decorated the lawns and porches with Japanese lanterns and electric lights, and provided tables, chairs and dishes. The food materials were all donated so that the income was practically net. Five of these summer night festivals were held in various sections of the town, and the work was all done by the people and all the people helped in furnishing supplies. The average attendance on these occasions was about one thousand people. "The church set everybody to work and has put this town on the map. It has never before had anything of its own. There was an adage, 'Good things either never get here or they pass us by.' "

During last summer extensive improvements were made on the church property; the organ was moved and equipped with an electric blower; the church was redecorated by Boston artists; a new carpet was laid; a new furnace and ventilator system installed and the cellar concreted. In July the pastor went into camp with a group of the boys at a nearby lake. The Young Men's Christian Association was equipped with additional apparatus such as basketball and indoor baseball outfits, quoits and boxing gloves (for this church is not afraid to teach its young men the art of self-defense). In September a girls' club was organized. The girls took up calisthenics, basket ball and other indoor games, besides basketry and embroidery. The last to be provided for were the younger women who had no connection with the church or Ladies' Aid Society. A teacher was secured to give them ten weeks' work in basketry. This is a popular fad and yet it is more than that. Some of the women whose opportunities are limited and who live humdrum lives have a new interest and are adding materially to their incomes by making and selling baskets. They find a ready market in the town craftshops. With the basketry came the desire to revive home industries. Groups were formed to learn tatting, netting, cross-stitch, embroidery and rug-weaving. Many articles made by the girls and women were displayed at a State Social Welfare Exhibit and received favorable comment. The arts and crafts club enrolled thirty-seven women, two-thirds of whom were not interested in the church affairs and more than half of whom were Catholics. To rally all the forces for the spiritual growth of the church a definite program was kept before the people throughout the year beginning on Rally Sunday in September and ending with Children's Sunday in June. The Sunday-school has grown a hundred per cent.; the church's vested choir was enlarged and music of a higher order used. Much effort has been put into the church services. Simple sermons have succeeded in drawing most of the children to church. Sunday evenings have been given to expository sermons on the great characters of the Bible and the mid-week meetings have taken the form of a study class using the Bible as a text book. A class of young men has taken the University of Chicago Extension Bible Study Course on the origin and teachings of the New Testament under the pastor's direction. The climax of the spiritual activities of the church came at Easter. An evangelist was secured and helped conduct a series of meetings, and as a result a large number of persons united with the church.

In one way the work of the church has gone beyond the community. As spring approached it was thought desirable to give the farmers some scientific aid in agriculture. It was too expensive to arrange instructions for the one community, and accordingly the coöperation of five neighboring communities was secured. A series of lectures by professors of the State University was arranged. In this district there are no rich men to pay the bills. All expenses have been borne by the people themselves, except those of the Young Men's Christian Association apparatus and the girls' uniforms, which have been given by friends.

This church has become a power in the community. It has healed the old sores and taught the people that they can and ought to be friends. No one living in this town or in the surrounding country need feel isolated. The church has touched every part of the life—social, business, educational and religious. The wasteful competition, the disintegration and disgraceful factions are now almost unknown. With a larger vision of service the church has developed leadership of its own and made of the people community servants. This church has a right to be called Christian.

What has been done here can be done to some degree in almost every community. It cannot be expected that all the things that succeed in one locality will succeed in another, but in general the program that is successful in one place will be successful in another.

The one thing requisite if the church is to become a social center is that its eyes shall be turned outward toward the community rather than inward toward itself. The membership of the church and especially the governing Board must adopt a liberal policy regarding the use of the church building. Wherever it is possible the building ought to be offered to various helpful organizations, heat and light furnished without ex-

GYMNASIUM IN COMMUNITY HOUSE, WINNETKA, ILLINOIS

pense, or with a minimum charge which will cover the actual cost of usage. If the church is to be made a social center a broad-minded policy must be adopted. In one community the people wondered why the boys would not use the parish house, but they had taken every occasion to warn the boys against the evils of pool and would not allow a pool table to be installed, even though the boys offered to pay for it themselves, for it was the one thing they desired above everything else for the time being. In consequence this church lost its opportunity, and the boys played pool in a back room of a near-by fruit store that was owned by a Greek. The successful church whose work is detailed in this chapter made its first impression upon the community by offering to meet the community's need for recreation, and when it did this it succeeded in establishing itself in the center of affairs. The result was that it gained the confidence of all the people and was able to help them in every good undertaking. Naturally the community at large came to look upon the church as an authority not only in spiritual matters but in other things as well.

Some day the church as a whole will see its opportunity and throughout the country wherever there is a church there will be a center for inspiring the community and helping it to face its problems bravely and solve them with wisdom.

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